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ABSTRACT

An international team of researchers studied the following aspects of training in Belgium's motor vehicle repair and sales sector: structure and characteristics; institutional and social context; relationship to Belgium's overall labor market; changing structural, economic, and organizational conditions; and training and recruitment and relationship to Belgium's education system. Data were obtained from a review of government social and labor/employment statistics and from case studies of the four firms: Peugeot Talbot, Volvo, Ford, and Mercedes. Each case study included a general profile of the company, its personnel management and vocational policies, and its provisions for continuing/ongoing training. Belgium's educational system was found to contain at least four different channels by which individuals can prepare for jobs in the sector. Most public-private collaborative training efforts were focused on at-risk groups. In total training activities within the sector, the initiatives taken by motor vehicle manufacturers played the most important role. Training initiatives and policies varied widely by company. Collaborations between different manufacturers appeared to represent a very important option for the future and self-study was increasing in importance. Most manufacturers invested in their own training infrastructures; however, training was also contracted out. (Fifteen tables are included). (MN)

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European Commission

BELGIUM REPORT

MOTOR VEHICLE REPAIR AND SALES SECTOR

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MOTOR VEHICLE REPAIR AND SALES SECTOR

TRAINING IN THE MOTOR VEHICLE REPAIR AND SALES SECTOR IN BELGIUM

REPORT FOR THE FORCE PROGRAMME

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Commission of the European Communities
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Human Resources, Education, Training and Youth
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Jean Monnet House, Bundesallee 22, D-10717 Berlin

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under the responsibility of Felix Rauner, ITB – Bremen and in close collaboration with Tina Bertzeletou, CEDEFOP.

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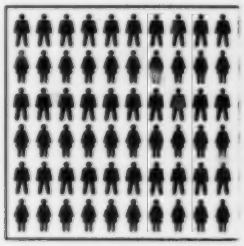
PART 1:



1. Definition and scope of the sector
2. Structure and characteristics of the sector
3. Institutional and social context
4. Employment and labour
5. Changing conditions and their consequences
6. Training and recruitment
7. Appendices

1. DEFINITION AND SCOPE OF THE SECTOR

The economic activities listed under codes 50.1 to 50.3 of the CITI classification correspond to the NACE classifications 614.7 – 651.1 – 671.1 and 671.2, as used in Belgium. The following sectors are covered by these codes:

614.7: wholesale dealing in vehicles and vehicle parts and accessories;
651.1: retailing of motor vehicles (other than motorcycles), new and second-hand and parts and accessories thereof;
671 : repair of motor vehicles and bicycles

It should be noted that dealing in second-hand cars is included in its entirety. It is unclear under which NACE code leasing agents are classified. Petrol stations are not included under these codes, but are listed under codes 652.0 and 654.9. Similarly, motorcycles and cycles do not come under the above codes: these subsectors, too, are classified under their own code, i.e. 651.2. The NACE classification is used as a basis for calculating the statistical employment figures which are published periodically by the National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance (RIZIV-INAMI) and the National Social Security Department (RSZ-ONSS). These statistics are used in the chapter on employment and labour.

The area of authority of the employers' organizations and the trade union organizations extend beyond the sectors described above. This means the statistics distributed by these organizations are, therefore, less relevant. Where no alternative to these statistics exists it is clearly stated.

No statistics are available regarding the size of the companies; the only data available relates to the average size of three of the four subsectors. We shall return to this in the following chapter.

2. STRUCTURE AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SECTOR

1.

The development of the sector is obviously closely related to the continuous growth of motor vehicle sales. In 1962 there were approximately one million motor vehicles in Belgium[1]. Within six years this figure had doubled, and 13 years later had trebled. In 1987 the number of motor vehicles passed the four million mark, and this figure rose again to almost 4.5 million motor vehicles in 1990, of which 3.8 million were cars. A record number of new cars (473,000) were registered that year. The market fell back slightly (down 2%) in 1991, though in this respect Belgium fared better than other EC Member States, where (excluding Germany) a fall of 9% was recorded. The situation is expected to stabilize in 1992. The British Euromotor Bureau predicts that the number of new cars sold in the year 2010 will be the same as in 1990. However, it forecasts that the number of private cars will increase from 3.8 million to no less than 5.2 million units by 2010.

Despite the increase in the number of vehicles the fact remains that for a considerable time the motor vehicle market has been a replacement market: the market for second-hand cars and motor vehicles for combined use accounts for approximately two thirds of all sales. The ratio of new to second-hand cars is also important. Before 1980, one used car was sold for every new vehicle. After this date the balance shifted in favour of used vehicles, and experts predict that in the near future this ratio, or coefficient, will reach 1.3 in favour of second-hand cars. This figure is very low in comparison with Belgium's neighbours France and Germany, where the coefficient is 2. The reason for this is the much heavier tax on used car sales in Belgium.

The majority of vehicles sold are obviously private cars and this category accounts for no less than 87% of all vehicles (motorcycles excluded) sold; 8% are lorries and 3% farm tractors. Other categories have a market share of less than 1%. The number of lorries and tractors has grown significantly over the last five years compared to the number of private cars (growth of more than 20% against only 16% for private cars). The only category to show a fall over the last five years is buses. The prospects for the sale of lorries in Belgium up to the year 2000 appear to be fairly good; the number of new lorries sold in 1991 was 40,000, and this figure is expected to increase to 50,000 by the year 2000, although high interest rates, tax on diesel, road tax and the difficult job market for lorry drivers are all uncertain factors. Divergent trends can be observed within Europe in this respect. In Germany and Austria truck sales have risen steeply, while severe setbacks were suffered in the UK and Sweden. Table 1 summarizes the current structure of the sector.

Table 1 – Numbers and market share of the sales and service points in the sector (1990)

	Number of sales and service points	%
• Car dealers (including importers' sales points)	3,617	24.5
• Agents and recognized repair shops	2,409	16.3
• Independent dealerships, second-hand car dealers and service stations	4,445	30.1
• Tyre specialists	568	3.8
• Body repair shops	1,624	11.0
• Importers, distributors and retailers of car components and accessories, tools and repair shop equipment	1,678	11.4
• Technical specialists: electric systems, brakes, diesel, exhausts	277	1.9
• Engine specialists	85	0.6
• Sales and service points of large sales companies	60	0.4
	14,763	100.0

If petrol stations, car washes, car breakers, technical testing stations and driving schools are included there are a total of 17,441 companies. In comparison, in 1981 these companies totalled 13,290. Categories in this list were removed from the original table because they do not belong to the sector which is the subject of this study. A strict comparison with the year 1981 is not possible because different categories were used at that time. However, we can state with some certainty that the number of sales and service points in the categories listed in table 1 has increased. The number of petrol stations has halved over ten years. We can also illustrate a number of other developments. There has been a notable increase in the number of independent repair shops, while the number of dealers and agents and recognized repair shops has remained remarkably constant. The number of body repair shops rose rapidly at the start of the 1980s, but thereafter fell again equally quickly. This is undoubtedly due in part to the requirement imposed by importers that dealers should provide a bodywork service.

An important historical trend is the emergence of 'autocentres', comprising a few large sales and specialist companies selling specific spare parts or items of equipment which are quick to fit – tyres, shock absorbers, brakes, exhausts, car radios, etc. Although this category is still enjoying a certain amount of growth, the pace is beginning to

[1] The term "motor vehicles" includes private cars, motor coaches, lorries and vans, tractor units, farm tractors and specialist vehicles.

slacken off. There is a noticeable trend towards internationalization by the specialist companies (Quick Fit, Midas, Speedy, Halfords, Brezan). Despite the fact that car manufacturers have responded to this development by setting up their own specialist companies, the car dealers and agents, independent repair shops and bodyshops have managed to retain the largest share of the market.

Other important factors are 'do-it-yourself' activities and undeclared work. In the most recent Economic and Social Report (Autotechnica Times 1991) it is estimated that these activities account for 15 to 20% of the total turnover volume in the sector. However, this figure is difficult to interpret. In the first place, it is the result of a combination of two totally different activities and it is unclear which share is accounted for by undeclared work and do-it-yourself activities, respectively. On the basis of a number of developments (including technological), there are strong reasons for suspecting that do-it-yourself activities have reached their maximum market share and are likely to decline in the future. Another problem is the lack of any comparable figures with other sectors. At all events, discussions with several people involved in the sector revealed that spare-time work is not a problem in the sector in the sense of distorting competition (as is the case, for example, in the construction and hairdressing sectors).

The main feature of the Belgian market is its open character, with all the major European, American and Japanese car makers represented. In 1990 more than 2,000 models of private cars and cars for combined use were available. This requires great effort from the service sector (e.g. stocking small quantities of large numbers of spare parts). Opal has the largest market share with 11.2%, followed by Ford, Renault, Peugeot, Citroën, Toyota, Nissan, Mazda and Audi. Fierce competition means that sector profitability is low. This is one of the reasons why employment prospects are not particularly attractive. In addition, the sector is typically represented by very small companies. Even if one-man businesses are omitted, the average level of employment in the retail sector is 3.8. The motor vehicle and cycle repair sector employs an average of 5.5 staff per company, while the figure for body repair shops falls to 3.5.

The sector generated 2.14% of GNP in 1988. This figure has remained stable since 1980. Although Belgium does not manufacture its own makes of car, it is the largest car manufacturer in the world per capita of the population, producing 12 cars per 100 inhabitants compared with only 8 in Japan and 7 in Germany. More than 98% of private cars made in Belgium are destined for export, making Belgium highly sensitive to international car sales. Developments in the markets in Germany (34% of exports), France (17%) and Britain (11%) are of particular importance.

1,138,000 cars were assembled in Belgium in 1991, a drop of 2.3% compared to 1990. Table 2 shows the key figures for the Belgian car assembly industry. The figures are for 1990.

Table 2 – Key figures on the car assembly industry in Belgium (1990)

Name	Model	Production (in units)	Turnover (x Bfr billion)	Current pre-tax result (x Bfr million)	Staff level (in units)
Ford Werke AG[1]	Sierra	311,803	130.80	191	12,999
GM Continental	Kadett, Vectra	389,237	60.10	4,885	10,146
VW Brussel	Passat, Golf	204,300	71.00	3,589	7,044
Renault Industries Belgique	R5, Clio, R21	171,935	42.40	427	3,885
Volvo Cars Europe Industry	740, 940	83,122	49.50	1,462	3,058
Total		1,160,397	353.80	11,554	37,132

[1] Ford also produces the Transit in Belgium

Source: FEBIAC Balanscentrale

The appendices also include a table with the total car sales figures by manufacturers' make.

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3. INSTITUTIONAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT

1.

Four Joint Committees (JCs) regulate social relations in the sectors concerned. These Committees are as follows:

JC 112: Joint Committee for the motor vehicle industry (dealers, agents, car-washes, car rental, tyre specialists, (filling) and service sector);
JC 149.2: Joint Committee for bodywork companies;
JC 149.4: Joint Committee for the metal trade sector (all sales companies).
JC 218: Supplementary Joint Committee for white-collar workers (ANPKB)

It should be noted that the powers of JC 112, 149.4 and 218 extend beyond the sectors dealt with in this study.

The average working week for both manual and white-collar workers is generally 38 hours, with the exception of bodywork companies where the average is 39 hours per week. However, a good deal of overtime is worked, some of which is undeclared. In addition, many people in the sector are self-employed, and for these individuals the average working week obviously does not apply.

There are in fact no rules concerning vocational training. The only existing regulation is the 0.25% provision (whereby 0.25% of the payroll of each sector must be spent on providing training and employment opportunities for the so-called risk groups). It is up to the Joint Committee in each sector to work out a programme for implementing this measure on the basis of the Collective Labour Agreement. Joint Committees which take no action in this respect are required to pay the whole of the 0.25% into the National Employment Fund.

However, a Collective Labour Agreement has been agreed within the sector, the most important consequence of which was the setting up of a jointly managed foundation. In addition to encouraging professional training for low-opportunity groups (in collaboration with the Flemish Employment and Training Service), the foundation also represents the sectors with regard to the education system.

Educational leave is also worthy of note. All full-time employees in the private sector can take advantage of this scheme. Under certain conditions, they can claim paid leave in order to follow training courses. This training may – though this is not essential – be related to their current job. The extent to which this right is exercised in the sector under study is not known.

Access to the occupation is subject to statutory regulations for motor vehicle business owners, repairers, coach-builders and used vehicle dealers (Royal Decrees of 24 January 1974, 10 March 1982, 20 December 1974). In practice, however, the conditions appear to be fairly minimal. The environmental regulations are important: all companies which are considered hazardous to humans and the environment must apply for an environmental licence each time they start up or make a change to their business operation. The majority of companies in the study sector fall into this category of potentially hazardous companies. The powers to draw up environmental regulations are regionally based, which means that potentially there may be discrepancies between the regulations in Flanders and Wallonia. In practice, however, there is little difference.

The most recent programme agreement for new private cars which has been agreed between the Minister of Economic Affairs and the vehicle importers is also worth noting. This 1987 agreement imposes standard sales conditions as regards delivery date or term, price, delivery, payment, guarantees, liability, financing, etc. In addition, importers are offered the opportunity of adopting a somewhat more flexible pricing policy. The employers' organizations have also negotiated an agreement concerning the sale of second-hand cars; this contract was drawn up in collaboration with the consumer organization 'Testaankoop'. However, it is not a binding agreement.

Relationships between importers, on the one hand, and dealers and agents on the other, are regulated by EEC Regulation number 123/85. We shall return to this Regulation in the final chapter.

4. EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR

Two types of statistics are available from which data on employment is derived. First, there are the social statistics. The purpose of these statistics is not to create a profile of the working population; in essence, these statistics deal with the areas covered by social security legislation. Separate statistics are published for wage-earners and the self-employed. However, the statistics published for the self-employed are insufficiently detailed to provide information about the sectors concerned. Moreover, a different classification is used. We are therefore forced to restrict ourselves to wage-earners.

In addition to these statistics, there are the derived statistics. In principle, these are prepared on the basis of secondary sources. A number of statistics are available from the employers' federations. The advantage of these is that they cover both wage-earners and the self-employed. The disadvantage is that a number of subsectors are also included which do not form part of our study. Moreover, detailed comparisons are difficult due to changing categories over a period of time.

4.1 The wage-earning working population in the study sector (social statistics)

Here we look at two types of statistics, those published by the National Social Security Department and those produced by the National Institute for Health and Disability Insurance. The first set of statistics enables us to make the comparison in time requested by the commissioners of this study. The second set of statistics provides information on full-time and part-time working and the ages of the employees. The two sets of statistics differ in that the areas of application of the social security legislation are not completely identical, thus making comparison between the statistics impossible.

The sector which forms the subject of this study was restricted to the (NACE) subsectors 614.7 – 651.1 – 671.1 – 671.2. We shall first look at a number of identification characteristics of the employee population such as gender, employment contract, status and age. The results reflect the position as at 30 June 1990.
(see table 3, page 16)

The main conclusions are as follows:

- In 1990, 44,303 people were employed in the sector under review. This represented 1.9% of the total number of jobs in the private sector.

- 61% of the working population is made up of blue-collar workers: 84% are male and 91% are employees with a full-time contract. Naturally, there are also other differences between the various subsectors. Thus in the body repair shops, for example, we find more blue-collar workers, men and young employees. In the retail sector, there is an above-average level of part-time working.

- Compared to the total working population in the private sector, the sectors considered here employ on average more blue-collar workers, more men and more employees with a full-time employment contract. As regards age, the sector does not deviate greatly from the picture for the total working population, although the sectors considered do employ slightly more young people under the age of 25 (18.4% compared with 15.6% in the private sector as a whole).

4.2 The total working population in the sectors considered (derived statistics)

Table 4 – Number of wage-earners and self-employed in the sectors considered

	Wage and salary-earners	Self-employed	Total
1983	59,872	13,283	73,155
1987	55,962	14,870	70,832
1990	55,698	16,173	71,871

With a total employment level of 71,871 (including the self-employed), the sectors in question account for 2.6% of the working population employed in the private sector (2,792,863).

The difference in the number of wage and salary-earners between table 3 and table 4 is due to the following reasons. Table 4 includes apprentices, and a number of subsectors are also included which do not fit into the four subsectors in table 3 (e.g. petrol stations, car washes). The figures in table 4 are therefore undoubtedly an overestimate.

The main observation is that the number of self-employed persons has grown in recent years (this corresponds to the increased number of sales and service points). Moreover, there are indications that this increase has not taken place in sectors which do not actually form part of the subject of this study – on the contrary, the number of petrol stations has halved over the last nine years. Nonetheless, the total number of self-employed people has grown by 3,000. At first glance, table 4 appears to show a fall in the number of wage and salary-earners. This may be because, in the first place, there has been a large drop in the number of wage and salary-earners employed at petrol stations, a development which has been accompanied by a sharp fall in the number of apprentices. We shall return to this later in this report. There are reasons to assume, then, that the number of wage and salary-earners employed in

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Table 3 – Sales and repair of cars: number of wage-earners in terms of status, gender, employment contract and age (absolute figures and percentages)

Nace	Blue-collar workers	White-collar workers	Male	Female	Full-time	Part-time	– 24 yr.	25 – 34 yr.	35 – 44 yr.	+ 45 yr.
614.7	4,142	6,884	8,599	2,427	10,324	700	1,503	3,999	2,964	2,560
100% = 11,026	37.6%	62.4%	78.0%	22.0%	93.7%	6.3%	13.5%	36.3%	26.9%	23.2%
651.1	1,410	1,070	2,030	450	2,108	372	495	926	604	455
100% = 2,480	56.9%	43.1%	81.9%	18.1%	85%	15%	20%	37.3%	24.4%	18.3%
671.1	18,999	8,912	23,862	4,049	25,215	2,689	5,314	9,920	7,347	5,330
100% = 27,911	68.1%	31.9%	85.5%	14.5%	90.4%	9.6%	19%	35.5%	26.3%	19.1%
671.2	2,590	296	2,662	224	2,539	346	819	1,111	567	389
100% = 2,886	89.7%	10.3%	92.2%	7.8%	88.0%	12.0%	28.4%	38.5%	19.6%	13.5%
Total Sector	27,141	17,162	37,153	7,150	40,186	4,107	8,131	15,956	11,482	8,734
100% = 44,303	61.3%	38.7%	83.9%	16.1%	90.7%	9.3%	18.4%	36.0%	25.9%	19.7%
Private sector	1,149,322	1,151,558	1,374,537	926,343	1,838,941	461,939	358,937	860,529	616,638	464,778
100% = 2,300,880	50.0%	50.0%	59.7%	40.3%	79.9%	20.1%	15.6%	37.4%	26.8%	20.2%

614.7 Wholesale trade in vehicles and accessories
651.1 Retail trade in cars and components, including second-hand cars
671.1 Motor vehicle and cycle repairs
671.2 Body repair shops

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the sectors we have considered has not fallen, but may well have risen. The National Social Security Department statistics provide more information on this matter.

4.3 Evolution in the number of blue and white-collar workers (1982–1991)

Table 5 summarizes the data in this category.

This table shows that the number of wage-earners has indeed increased, particularly since 1987. This increase runs more or less parallel with the increase in car sales. From 1981 to 1986 there is relatively little movement, following which the increase resumes, averaging out at around 3%. The average rise between 1982 and 1991 is 14%. Table 6 indicates whether this increase was stronger in particular sectors or groups of employees.

Table 6 – Relative increase in the number of employees between 1982 and 1991 in the car sales and repair sectors, in %

Blue-collar workers	16
White-collar workers	12
Male	12
Female	30
Male blue-collar workers	13
Female blue-collar workers	64
Male white-collar workers	8
Female white-collar workers	22
Wholesale trading in vehicles and accessories	16
Retail trading in cars and components, including second-hand cars	48
Motor vehicle and cycle repair	8
Body repair shops	61
Total	14

There is an above average increase in employment among female blue-collar workers and white-collar workers, and also in the retail and body repair shop sectors.

In spite of these increases, however, the number of apprentices has fallen sharply (from 4,525 in 1982 to 2,790 in 1991). This means that the traditional apprenticeship system is now being used to a lesser extent as an initial training channel for new employees in the sector. It is likely that the traditional apprenticeship system has lost ground to vocational and technical secondary education. We are not aware of why this should be so, though the expansion of higher secondary vocational education could be a significant factor here.

We were unable to collect certain data requested. For example, we have no information regarding the type of companies in which employment has increased (small or large). We also have no data regarding the career structure and employment of migrant and handicapped people.

The employment prospects for the future are not particularly favourable. A study carried out to assess the future prospects for Belgian industry and services places both the retail and repair of motor vehicles and cycles, as well as the body repair shop sector, among the less favoured tertiary sectors (Gos, 1992).

Finally, we would point out that statistical data must always be viewed with the necessary caution. Thus, for example, a trade union representative points out that some companies in the car assembly sector have contracted out certain activities to the repair sector. This leads to a shift in the employment between these two sectors, and means that we can no longer speak of a true growth in employment in one sector. It is unclear, however, how many jobs are involved in this specific case.

Table 5 – Evolution of the level of employment in the car sales and repair sectors (1982–1991)

	Blue-collar workers						White-collar workers					
	Male			Female			Male			Female		
	1982	1987	1991	1982	1987	1991	1982	1987	1991	1982	1987	1991
Wholesale trade in vehicles and accessories	3,425	3,831	3,968	367	392	496	4,888	5,427	5,504	1,813	1,997	2,203
Retail trade in cars and components, including second-hand cars	1,030	1,034	1,498	64	61	112	568	614	836	251	281	388
	18,557	18,371	19,845	640	743	1,095	6,378	5,751	6,400	2,927	2,796	3,433
Motor vehicle and cycle repair	1,942	2,343	3,007	29	51	102	119	146	213	79	99	172
Body repair shops												
	24,954	25,579	28,318	1,100	1,247	1,805	11,953	11,938	12,953	5,070	5,173	6,196

Aggregate total 1982: 43,077 (47,602 including apprentices)
Aggregate total 1987: 43,937 (47,614 including apprentices)
Aggregate total 1991: 49,272 (52,062 including apprentices)

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5. CHANGING CONDITIONS AND THEIR CONSEQUENCES

Historically, car assembly has set the pace in the development and implementation of new technologies. This has obviously had major consequences for the car repair and sales sector. The most relevant innovations are summarized below (source: Vocational Training Foundation for the Automotive Sector, undated). This is of course not the place to look at these developments in detail.

The breakthrough of electronics:

In the first phase of the electronics innovation, at the end of the 1960s, simple mechanical and electro-mechanical components, (e.g. indicators, distributor) were replaced by electronic components.

During the second phase, entirely new functions were created using electronics, such as fuel injection, electronic ignition, anti-lock braking systems (ABS).

In the third phase, electronics have become an integral part of the new designs for engine and drive system management, e.g. transmission management, engine management, chassis management. Further developments will be in the direction of optimizing the interplay between the vehicle and traffic, using electronically controlled systems for traffic management and information.

At the moment, the development of auto-electronics is in the transitional phase from 2 to 3.

Modern test and diagnostic techniques:

In the many and varied tests and diagnostic operations carried out in the automotive industry, microprocessor-controlled testing apparatus is being used to an increasing extent for engine diagnosis and for testing electronic automotive systems.

Modern lubricant technologies.

New materials:

The quantity of synthetic materials used in car construction is increasing. The advantages of these materials are related to weight, bodywork durability, easy mouldability, economic production and better resistance. The various materials used have widely differing properties, and this has major consequences for the recycling of plastic components, since not all these components are systematically replaced in the event of problems.

- New information systems:
- repair estimates;
- valuation of second-hand cars;
- technical service information systems;
- new information systems – Audatex

The latter innovation is directly related to the increased need for training. The Audatex databank (based in Minden, Germany) contains data on 25 makes of car, 220 models and 2,100 types in 11,000 versions. This information is updated daily. Via a specially designed terminal network, this data can be retrieved and processed to produce, for example, a detailed damage assessment report. The advantages are obvious: employees can improve their training in a flexible way at the workplace, and are able to set their own learning pace.

As far as we are aware, no information is available regarding the extent to which these innovations have penetrated the sector in Belgium. However, since all technologically advanced cars are also found on the Belgian market, we feel that the Belgian situation does not differ significantly from that in neighbouring countries. The knowledge and skills required to keep pace with the technological innovations are often passed on to dealers and agents by the manufacturers themselves via training courses arranged in their own centres. We shall return to this in the chapter on training.

To what extent structural, economic and organizational changes affect the required qualifications is not entirely clear. The fierce competition forces dealers to provide high quality at low prices. The resultant low profitability can act as a brake on expensive technological innovations. Since we are dealing here with small companies, it is possible that technological changes are limited.

6. TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT

1.

In this section we shall first discuss the various training systems which are relevant for the sector. These are exclusively training courses which specifically prepare the way to technical jobs; these are not courses in the education programme which prepare candidates for administrative or commercial posts in the sector.

First we shall look in some depth at school education. Almost all relevant courses are taught at secondary education level, similar courses are found throughout the different types of school.

We shall then look at what are termed the intermediary training structures: Social Advancement Education, the Public Employment and Training Service and Small Business Training. In principle, the courses offered are aimed at different target groups and have different objectives; in practice, however, there are overlaps. We shall then look at the sectoral training initiative. This does not involve the provision of extra training, but rather a sectoral training institute which aims to analyze the training needs in the various sectors concerned, and to devise suitable solutions. Among other things, these solutions can be found in collaboration with one or more intermediary training structures. We would also mention the fact that the foundation participates in a FORCE project whose aim is to investigate what knowledge of vehicle engineering is required of various employees.

Finally, there are the manufacturers' training initiatives. These occupy an important place in the sector, though unfortunately lack of time prevented us from obtaining complete information about them. In addition, there is a lack of information about the job profile of employees in the sectors concerned, and a similar lack of information on training efforts in the sector as a whole. We do not know what percentage of the payroll is invested in training; nor do we know how many companies in the sector provide training for their employees, let alone which employees follow which training courses.

6.1 Training

6.1.1 The Belgian education system and the motor vehicle repair and sales sector

On 20 June 1983 a law affecting all Belgians came into force which, in the first instance, extended the minimum school-leaving age to 16 years (full-time education) and subsequently to 18 years (full-time or part-time). Prior to that time, schooling had been compulsory between the ages of six and fourteen years. The entire secondary education system now forms part of compulsory education, giving Belgium a unique position in Europe.

The state education structures have developed differently in the separate regions of Belgium. The 'national' legislation which was in existence before the division of Belgium into autonomous communities (1971: type I and 1957: type II) was recently replaced in the Flemish community by a new decree on secondary education. For this reason, type I and type II schools are now only found in the French-language and German-language regions of the country.

We do not consider that much purpose would be served in the context of this report by re-examining the whole area of secondary education in Belgium's three language communities. Information on this is provided in the appendices.

If we limit ourselves to that area of state education which is relevant to the sector, it is immediately apparent that there are certain disciplines in both secondary and higher education which prepare candidates explicitly for a job within that particular discipline. We shall discuss this separately for Flanders and Wallonia. We will not discuss the intermediary structures, the sectoral training initiative or the manufacturers' training courses for Flanders and Wallonia separately, though we do state which data relate to Flanders and which to Wallonia.

Flanders

The majority of disciplines which prepare candidates for employment in the sector concerned are found in vocational secondary education. The following areas can be mentioned: car technology, bodywork/panel-beating, lorry driver, cycles/motor cycles and light combustion engines. In addition, there are six different specialization years (the seventh year), with the following range of options: special bodywork techniques, special spraying techniques, auto-electrics, commercial vehicles, diesel and LPG engines and engine maintenance.

In technical secondary education we find only one course in car technology and one specialization year in applied car technology.

Part-time vocational secondary education offers two courses, in motor vehicle technology and bodywork.

The possibility of organizing the industrial apprenticeship system (motor vehicle engineering and bodywork) is also under consideration.

In the small business apprenticeship system (apprenticeship agreements and apprenticeship contracts in the small business sector), young people can train to be a manager/owner, car mechanic, body repairer and in car radiator building and repair. On 31 December 1990 there were no less than 402 agreements in force for the profession of body repairer and 826 for owners. Of the 6,714 agreements and contracts

involving male apprentices, one in five therefore relates to a trade connected to the sector under review. As stated earlier, however, the number of agreements in Belgium in the sectors in question has fallen by no less than 14% in recent years.

In the higher education sector we find only one course, in car mechanics. This is a training course of the shorter type.

Clearly, then, there is a wide choice of training courses on offer for young people wishing to work in this sector. Additionally, employers have a wide choice from the young people completing the various types of study. The trainee placements in full-time education and the practical components of the apprenticeship schemes are other instruments which enable employers to pass on specific skills and to screen potential future employees. It is not clear whether the various types of study are in competition with each other or whether a system of market segments is in play in which, for example, the small business apprenticeship system focuses on independent businesses while the vocational and technical education sector aims at larger dealerships attached to certain manufacturers. What is clear, however, is that, seen historically, the small business apprenticeship system is no longer geared towards the children of self-employed workers, who later take over the business. This appears to be less and less the case, and may be one of the reasons for the large fall in the number of apprenticeship agreements in recent years.

Research results are available on the employment achievements of those who have completed a training course.

We can say with some certainty that, until recently, there was a very smooth transition to the labour market. Irrespective of the type of training followed, work was found fairly quickly in a job which matched the training (Denys, 1990; Denys, 1991). We suspect that the recent economic downspring will have an adverse effect on this through-flow in the future. We would also repeat that the employment prospects for this sector are rather uncertain.

Wallonia

One difference to Flanders is that more courses in Wallonia are organized at technical secondary level. There is also a more varied range of courses. This has to do with the organization of the educational system, which allows more scope for specialization. However, financial constraints could mean that the wide variety of options may be cut back in the next academic year.

In the vocational secondary education sector we find the following courses: assistant car mechanic/repairer, car mechanic/repairer, car mechanic, motor vehicle mechanic, maintenance engineering, engine mechanic, assembly and maintenance engineering, light engineering, maintenance, repair, motor vehicle electro-engineering, car electrics and electronics, bodywork repair and painting, bodywork, car bodywork, bodywork painting, bodywork repair.

In technical secondary education we find courses for assistant car mechanic/repairer, car mechanic/repairer, car mechanic, engine mechanic, diesel engines, petrol engines, bodywork painting and bodywork repair.

In the specialization years we find one course in technical secondary education: car electrics and three courses in vocational secondary education: motor mechanic, car bodywork and bodywork repair. In part-time vocational education there are courses for bodywork repair and repair shop mechanic.

In the small business apprenticeship system we find courses for owners, electricity, bodywork repair and car accessories dealer.

On 31 December 1990 no less than 1,522 young people were following courses leading to these occupations. In spite of this large number, however, we would repeat that the number of apprenticeship agreements and apprenticeship contracts has fallen sharply in recent years, and that this has occurred in spite of increasing employment in the sector. Whether this fall is more pronounced in Wallonia than in Flanders, or vice versa, is not clear, but the fact that it is occurring points to a weakening of the market position of the traditional apprenticeship scheme as a training system leading to employment in this sector.

We have no data for Wallonia concerning the through-flow to the jobs market, though given the much higher level of unemployment in Wallonia we suspect that this is a more difficult process. Beyond this, the same comments which applied to Flanders also apply to Wallonia.

As regards state education, both in Flanders and Wallonia, there are two important comments to be made with regards to this sector. In the first place, the number of institutions offering training courses is much too large. Belgium has some 270 schools offering similar training courses in vocational and technical secondary education, compared with barely 125 in the Netherlands. These schools have too little financial strength to be able to satisfactorily follow the development of new technologies. In fact, this applies to the majority of sectors. Although industry often offers assistance in this area, it often remains a make-do-and-mend solution. The only real solution is likely to come from a major reduction in the number of schools.

In addition this sector, in common with others, complains of a lack of interest among young people in the relevant education. One reason suggested for this is the competition from a number of sectors where wage levels are higher (such as car assembly). According to the employers, on the other hand, higher wages are only possible if the price of the service to the client were also to increase. We would point out that graduates in the disciplines described above are also much in demand on the labour market as regards qualifications, due to the versatile nature of the pretraining (both mechanics and electronics).

6.1.2 The training path

There are three main bodies in the training path providing courses: Social Advancement Education, the Public Employment and Training Service, the Public Employment Office and the Small Business Training Scheme. As its name suggests, the Social Advancement Education system (SAE) is closely interlinked with the existing state education system and is often attached to full-time education institutions. Historically, it developed as "second-chance education", which offered an opportunity for people who had left state education without a diploma to obtain one in later life outside working hours. The system also functions as a further training channel, and many people also use it for leisure training. The Social Advancement Education system is without doubt the largest body providing training in the so-called intermediary circuit. In 1989, 135,000 persons in Flanders were following a course provided by this system; the figure in Wallonia was 124,000.

In Flanders, the SAE operates two systems. The traditional system is based on the pattern of a linear education system with a strict division into subjects and years. In order to complete a course successfully, the trainee is usually required to follow all subjects on the course for a few evenings per week over a period of three years. In higher vocational secondary education, this system offers a choice of nine training courses. Two courses are offered in higher technical secondary education.

In addition to the traditional system, a modular course unit system has been in existence for a number of years. There are no consecutive academic years in this system. Each vocational training course is divided into a number of modules which form useful, coherent fields of knowledge at a given level and which are built up from a number of career-oriented units. This makes the modular system much more flexible and closely adapted to the needs and requirements of present-day employers. There are currently two training courses in this new system in Flanders. Experts feel that the system will have to be developed along more flexible lines in the future.

At present this modular course unit system does not exist in Wallonia but it is implemented in the state education system. There are three different training courses in the vocational secondary and technical secondary educational sectors.

It is difficult at this moment in time to estimate what function these training courses fulfil. We have no figures for Wallonia, while for Flanders the study carried out by Struyven shows that two major factors play a role (Struyven, 1991).

For a large group, the free-time factor plays a decisive role. Trainees follow the training courses to enable them to tinker with their own car (or that of a neighbour) in their spare time.

For another group, the qualification is the most important factor; trainees follow the course with a view to obtaining the certificate. What they intend to do with the certificate is less clear, but it is possible that trainees wish to use it on the job market.

The present occupation of the trainees has virtually no significance. From this we can deduce that the SAE is not used at the moment as a continuing training channel for the sector, though the possibility that employees from the sector who have no diploma or certificate, and who hope to obtain this via the SAE, cannot be ruled out.

The Flemish Employment and Training Service, in addition to its work placement task, also has a training function. Obviously, job-seekers are trained so that they are able to obtain skilled employment. In recent years training courses have also been developed for those in work. The philosophy behind this is that those in work need to update their training in order to maintain their jobs. In general, these training courses are very positively evaluated by employers.

There are currently ten basic training courses for careers in the study sector. In addition to this, there are five specialist training courses. These can be followed by people who have successfully completed a basic training course, but are also open to those in work who wish to update their training. In this case, it is usually the employer who takes the initiative. The following figures illustrate the results of some training courses. Six months after finishing a particular training course, 56% of the formerly unemployed people had a full-time job, 3% worked part-time, 12% followed a new training course and 29% were still unemployed. This result is comparable to the general results for all the training courses.

In Wallonia, the Employment and Training Service offers two training courses, but it is not clear whether these are basic or specialist courses.

An extremely important factor in the context of this study is the agreement which has been reached between the Flemish and Walloon Employment and Training Services and the sector, regarding the so-called 0.18–0.25% funds. The 1989–1990 interprofessional agreement contained a commitment that the private sector should provide 0.18% of the gross wages paid to employees to support employment-promoting initiatives for risk groups.

In the most recent interprofessional agreement (1991–1992) this contribution was raised to 0.25%. The declared intention was that at least 0.10% would be spent on the most vulnerable groups on the labour market. These contributions are collected by the National Social Security Department and then paid into the National Employment Fund.

The agreement also provided an alternative way of spending the contribution. Individual sectors or companies can obtain exemption from the Ministry of Employment and Labour on condition that they reach a commitment in a Collective Labour Agreement to make at least equal efforts on behalf of risk groups. In this case, the contributions are paid into the accounts of jointly managed funds or a non-profit organization. These sectoral funds have taken a range of initiatives aimed at rehabilitating risk groups into the labour market, including the granting of employment subsidies.

Many sectors and companies have made use of this facility, since it enables them to keep the financial resources within their own sector or company. In addition, they are then able to determine themselves what training and employment initiatives will be implemented.

Several sectors have opted to set up an institute to regulate these matters. The majority of these institutes have in turn elected to work together with the Flemish Employment and Training Service or its Wallonian counterpart, FOREM. This collaboration is not exclusive, in that it does not rule out initiatives with other training bodies. We shall return to the sectoral training institute later. What we can say is that the collaboration agreement with the Flemish Employment and Training Service and the Employment and Training Service in Wallonia led to 198 training courses in 1991, tailored to six different jobs.

It is noteworthy that these training courses are followed by a training placement in a 'guardian' company, and that successful completion of a training course guarantees a job.

It is also striking that in the sector studied, the full 0.18% and 0.25% contribution was spent on training, which was certainly not the case in all sectors. The sector did make use of the National Employment Fund to enable an adequate wage to be paid to those involved in training programmes in the context of Royal Decree 495 (alternating employment and education for young people aged between 18 and 25).

The third major provider of training courses is the Flemish Institute for Self-Employed Businessmen (VIZO). In Wallonia this institute is known as 'l'Institut de Formation Permanente des Classes Moyennes'. These institutes supervise the traditional apprenticeship schemes discussed earlier in this report. They also provide training courses designed to update skills. The most important of these is the course in running a small business. This course covers both aspects of running a business and subject knowledge. Language courses are optional. In principle, only those with the relevant practical experience are permitted to follow this course, though exceptions to this rule are possible.

In Flanders, courses provided include training for a career as a bodywork repairer, company owner and used car dealer. In 1990 more than 1,000 trainees followed courses in these occupations. Approximately one in twelve trainees follows one of these courses for a career in the sector concerned.

In addition to these small business courses, there are also completion courses and advanced courses. The completion courses contain no activities which relate to this sector. Advanced courses are organized for bodywork repairers and electricians.

In Wallonia, training programmes have been set up for the jobs of repair shop mechanic, body repairer, accessories dealer and auto-electrician. In 1990 there were 784 trainees on these courses.

As regards further training, there is also a business manager section, with places for one hundred trainees.

6.1.3 The sectoral training initiatives

We mentioned earlier the collaboration agreement between the Flemish Employment and Training Service, its Walloon counterpart and the sector. The 0.18% and 0.25% funds have set up an institute in the sector (the Foundation for Vocational Training in the Automotive Sector), whose first priority is to ensure that this money is usefully spent. As stated above, the target group of the 0.18%–0.25% contributions are the so-called risk groups – people with low qualifications and the long-term unemployed – although the total sphere of activity is much wider. Thus, for example, the foundation acts as a voice for the sector in contacts with state education – vocational and technical secondary education, part-time education, the industrial apprenticeship scheme and the traditional apprenticeship scheme. Through representation on sector committees, the foundation is able to exert influence on the

curricula of those areas of state education relating to the sector.

In view of the large number of training courses provided in the intermediary circuit, the foundation has a natural coordinating role to play here. The need for efficient use of scarce funds makes it necessary to arrange a division of tasks between the various major training bodies. On the other hand, it is by no means certain that some form of regulated competition is necessarily a bad thing. The foundation could have another important role in monitoring the quality of training courses offered. Finally, the foundation must constantly review the field, monitor new developments and closely analyze training needs.

We mention finally an initiative for commercial employees. CEVORA, a training institute connected to the Supplementary Joint Committee for white-collar workers (see Chapter 3. Institutional and social context), organizes a training course for commercial employees. The purpose of the course is to provide women seeking employment with the opportunity to enter the labour market by following a car saleswoman training course. The idea for this course started in France based on the discovery that car saleswomen achieved better results than their male counterparts.

6.1.4 Manufacturers' initiatives

As stated earlier, Belgium has an open motor vehicle market, in which all the major European, American and Japanese manufacturers are represented. Almost every manufacturer has its own training infrastructure in which technicians and commercial staff, in particular, are required to follow regular training. This is particularly the case when new models and new, sophisticated technologies are introduced. We are not aware of any data showing how many employees follow such training courses annually and whether different strategies are adopted in this respect by different manufacturers. What is certain is that the manufacturers' training initiatives form an essential part of the total training efforts in the sector. It is also unclear whether the employers' organizations have any control over training courses of this type. The case studies look in more detail at these specific training courses.

Belgium's central location in Europe has led a number of manufacturers (e.g. Toyota and Mazda) to set up their European Training Centre here.

Conclusion

It is no simple matter to define the training initiatives in this sector. Both in the state education sector and the training paths there are a large number of courses on offer – so many in fact that there are calls for rationalization (particularly as regards the state education sector). The most important developments are the sharp decline in the traditional apprenticeship scheme as a provider of future employees in the sector, and the emergence of the foundation – a jointly managed body whose most important objective is to balance supply and demand on the training market.

6.2 Recruitment

Virtually nothing is known about the recruitment sector. Thus, for example, we do not know whether the various training providers in the educational sector are in competition with each other, or whether the market is segmented.

The question of whether qualifications and diplomas play an important role in recruitment is another factor which is difficult to ascertain on the basis of scientific data, though we suspect that only a few people are still able to find work in the sector without any kind of diploma or training. We do know from our own research that in some cases people who have followed training courses in different disciplines (e.g. timber) find work in the sector. Of those who have completed courses in the relevant disciplines in the regular school education sector, we know that the vast majority find employment in a job which is related to their training. This applies both to those coming from full-time education and from the apprenticeship system.

Those involved in the sector are concerned about the low level of attraction which the sector exerts on young people. In the first place this is attributed to the better wages paid in competing industrial sectors and to the unattractive areas in which people are sometimes required to work. In order to put this into perspective, we would mention that this is a problem which is being experienced by all industrial sectors, as well as by the construction industry. It is therefore in no way a factor which is specific to this sector.

Finally, we would note that certain importers exercise strict control over recruitment at dealers and agents. For some makes of car, the selection (even of administrative staff) is carried out by the importer.

We would repeat once again that we have no data on the overall qualification level of the sector, let alone regarding any developments over time. Although it is certain that the average qualification level of employees is rising, we do not know whether this rise is relatively strong or not.

7. APPENDICES

1.

Appendix 1: The new general framework for secondary education in the Flemish Community

As the coexistence of two different structures in secondary education caused quite a number of complicated organizational, budgetary and psychological problems, the Flemish Community decided to replace the two forms – type I and type II – with a new general framework for secondary education. As a result of this decision, from 1 September, 1989 all Flemish secondary schools progressively adopted the new organizational form, from the first year of secondary education onwards.

In accordance with the decree dated 31 July, 1990 the new framework for secondary education in the Flemish Community is composed of three stages of two years each comprising four different forms:

- general academic education;
- technical education;
- arts education;
- vocational education.

Each stage consists of two years of study and forms a complete unit. At the end of the third stage of general academic, technical and arts secondary education, pupils may be awarded the certificate of higher secondary education giving access to higher education. At the end of general academic education, it is possible to take a seventh year of preparation for higher education. On completion of the special seventh year of vocational education, pupils may also obtain the officially recognized certificate of higher secondary education. The possibility of taking a seventh year of specialization and/or completion of training exists in technical, arts and vocational secondary education.

The four forms of education are not organized separately in the first stage. However, there is one exception: vocational education is organized from the second year onwards. From the second stage on, the four forms are organized separately. This does not rule out the possibility of organizing a certain number of common courses. In vocational education a fifth year of specialization may be organized as a short cut to entering employment.

In the first year, all pupils follow a common basic education of at least 27 periods per week consisting of the following subjects; religion or non-denominational ethics, Dutch, French, mathematics, history, geography, science, arts education, technical education, physical education (English may also be included). In addition, five periods a week are left to each school to fill as they wish within a defined and legally fixed framework. This allows the school to assert its own character as regards, for example, the tradition of the school and the socio-economic environment in which it is situated.

In the second year all pupils follow a basic course of at least 24 periods per week, consisting of the following subjects: religion or non-denominational ethics, Dutch, French, English, mathematics, history, geography, science, art education, technological education, physical education. At least 24 out of 24 periods are followed by all pupils. Special arrangements exist for pupils who follow vocational education from the second year. They study the same subjects provided in the basic course, except for French and English, but do so in a separate group. Apart from the basic course, 8 to 10 periods are available for each school to develop its individual character. In the second year of vocational education the basic course is limited to 16 periods. Two groups of subjects (a total of 16 periods) are added to this package. Each of these groups provides an introduction to the theory and practice of the main occupational sectors.

From the third year up to and including the sixth year, the four forms of education are organized separately, with a common and an optional package. The common part consists of the basic course; optional subjects are either fundamental (depending on further choices) or complementary.

Basic training from the third to the sixth year consists of the following subjects: religion or non-denominational ethics, Dutch, second modern language, mathematics, history, geography, science and physical education. General academic education also includes a third modern language. In vocational education the basic training from the third up to and including the sixth year consists of the following subjects: religion or non-denominational ethics, Dutch, history and geography (the last two subjects may be replaced by an integrated social education course) and physical education.

A wide range of subjects are offered in the optional section to supplement the basic course.

Although in principle each school may emphasize certain aspects through the organization of the periods available outside the compulsory basic education programme, this presupposes that arrangements are made within the various educational networks and that common programmes be developed.

Part-time education

The law of 29 June, 1983 relating to compulsory education provided for the creation of part-time secondary education, which is called reduced timetable education. The Royal Decree dated 16 July, 1984 established this form of education for an experimental period of two years. With the

addition of some necessary modifications, new decrees prolonged this experimental stage for the following years.

Decrees emanating from the various Community Councils will provide a definite form to this type of education which, in principle, is followed by pupils under the age of 18 who are not required to follow full-time education. However, it has been extended to include young people between the ages of 18 and 25 who have signed an apprenticeship contract in industry, or a work-training agreement, and to those who, before the age of 18, were already attending a part-time education centre.

In the Flemish Community, part-time vocational secondary education was given legal status in the decree dated 31 July, 1990, which confirms the existing experimental structure.

Part-time secondary education is provided for 40 weeks a year with 15 weekly periods of 50 minutes (8 periods of vocational training and 7 periods of general academic education).

It is provided by Centra voor Deeltijds Onderwijs (CDO/Centres d'Enseignement à Horaire Réduit (CEHR) (Centres for Part-time Education), of which there are 48 in the Flemish Community, 40 in the French-speaking community and 2 in the German-speaking Community.

It is thus possible to obtain a qualification certificate equivalent to the one awarded on completion of short-term or long-term vocational education.

Practical periods – in companies and other establishments – for apprentices from full-time secondary education

Practical periods are becoming increasingly important aspects of the curricula in a number of study areas in technical and vocational training. These are incorporated in the weekly training plans. The quality of these practical training periods varies greatly but in general they do make training more effective.

The schools can decide on either block or alternating practicals. Block practicals take place at a variety of training centres both in the country and abroad. The alternating practicals are interrupted by set periods of theoretical learning.

In the second and third year of the 3rd level of BSO, preference is given to occupational-oriented practicals which can be brought forward to the first year of the 3rd level of BSO and take the form of "participant practicals" or "commissioned practicals".

Appendix 2: Secondary education in the French- and German-speaking Communities

Type I education

In accordance with the law dated 19 July, 1971, type I (reformed) secondary education is composed of three stages of two years each: observation (1st level), orientation (2nd level) and determination (3rd level).

It is organized in four separate forms:

- general academic education;
- technical education;
- arts education;
- vocational training.

It is organized in two major study channels:

- the transition stream for general academic education and part technical education. Its main aim is to prepare pupils for higher education whilst leaving them the option of choosing to enter working life instead;

- the qualification stream, short-term at the end of the fourth year, long-term at the end of the sixth year, the main aim of which is to prepare pupils for entry into a career by obtaining a qualification certificate whilst allowing them the option of continuing their studies in higher education.

The purpose of the first level is to provide a broad general basic education; it allows the teachers to observe pupils in order to discover their main aptitudes; in principle, the curriculum is the same for all pupils in the first year A and includes a common syllabus with compulsory 'trial' or optional activities, supplementary and reinforcement classes and, if necessary, extra courses for pupils who encounter difficulties.

The curriculum for the second common year consists of a basic syllabus and an optional syllabus to be chosen freely by each pupil, and consisting of four or six periods (Latin, economics, science, art, music and technical subjects).

For those pupils who encountered difficulties in the course of their primary education and who cannot successfully complete it or cannot do so within the prescribed time limits, a modified syllabus is provided in a first year B (the so-called introductory year). In the second common year, a second year of vocational training is provided with a different syllabus in which pupils are introduced to at least two occupational fields.

The first stage should enable pupils to be oriented in the most suitable way towards the different courses available in the second stage.

Table 1 – The general system of secondary education in the Flemish Community

ASO: Algemeen Secundair Onderwijs – General secondary education
TSO: Technisch Secundair Onderwijs – Technical secondary education
KSO: Kunstsecundair Onderwijs – Secondary education (arts)
BSO: Beroepssecudair Onderwijs – Vocational secondary education
VHO: Voorbereidend jaar op Hoger Onderwijs – Higher education preparatory year
DSO: 3de jaar BSO om het diploma secundair onderwijs te behalen – 3rd year BSO with diploma in secondary education
BVL: Beroepsvoorbereidend leerjaar – Pre-vocational year

The second stage offers different syllabuses, both in the transitional section (general, technical or arts education), and in the qualification section (technical, arts or vocational training). The common training is reduced, whilst the optional part (single or grouped basic options, complementary options) is increased.

At the end of the second stage the following options are available:

- a proficiency or specialization year in the qualification streams (very reduced basic syllabus);
- a reorientation year for pupils who wish to change to a different section in the third stage.

At the outset of the third stage pupils make their choice from the study orientations available to them. The basic syllabus is reduced still further in favour of the optional part which constitutes the study orientation.

At the end of the third stage, several years are organized, such as:

- a preparatory year for pupils going on to higher education (a special year of mathematics, science, modern languages);
- proficiency or specialization years in the qualification streams;
- a year leading to a higher secondary education certificate in vocational training.

Throughout the first two stages and to a lesser extent in the third stage, there is the possibility of transferring from one form of education to another, as well as 'bridges' from vocational education to other types of education.

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1.

The structure of Type 1 (comprehensive) secondary education represents a clear move forward with regard to equal opportunities, but the number of pupils repeating a year and falling behind or abandoning their studies, as well as the number changing to another form of education following a failure may give rise to doubt as to its qualitative effectiveness; inequalities inherent in social background weigh heavily on the choice of stream and this choice is often conditioned by failure in primary education or in a form of secondary education which offers greater prospects for entering higher education or entering work in the future.

Type II educational path

Type II secondary education consists of six years divided into two cycles of three years each.

From the first year of type II secondary education, a differentiation is made between general secondary schools and technical secondary schools.

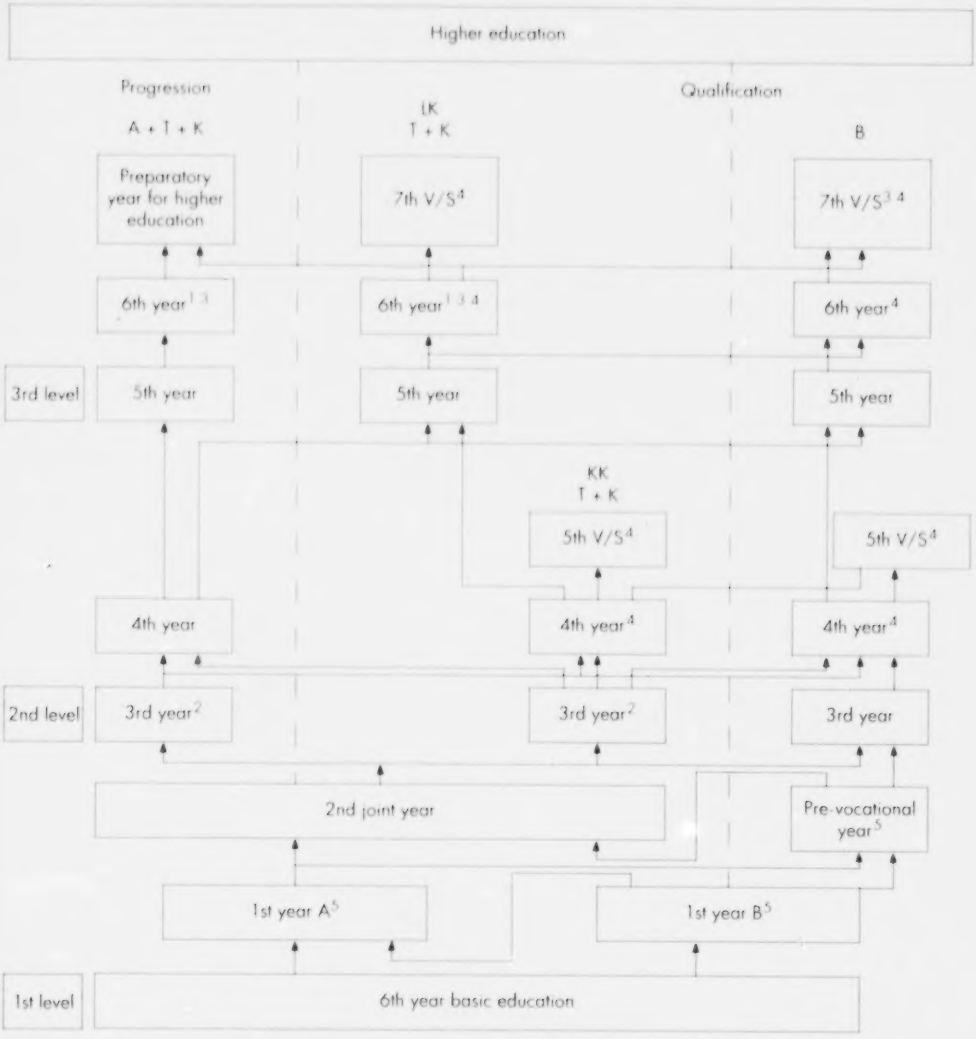
There is also a difference from the first year depending on whether or not pupils take Latin. As early as the lower cycle another differentiation is made between pupils who choose to follow Greek courses and pupils who do not.

At the beginning of the lower cycle pupils may choose between seven sections: Latin-Greek, Latin-mathematics and Latin-science (classics), scientific A or higher mathematics, scientific B or mathematics and science, economics and human sciences (modern humanities).

In technical secondary schools there is a common first year, referred to as the 'orientation year', prior to the differentiation into several study channels which occurs from the second year onwards; this first cycle, beginning after the first common orientation year, lasts three years and leads to an initial qualification. Pupils who are judged to have the required ability may embark upon the higher cycle, which also lasts three years. Technical schools also provide vocational training, which has the same structure as technical education.

The structure of type II education (with channels or streams) implies that the study streams are clearly chosen at the end of primary education and that a selection is made between pupils who wish to practise a trade and others who wish to follow training as a preparation to higher education and higher social functions; in most cases, the initial orientation determines the pupil's school career, in spite of the possibility, in theory, of changing over from one stream to another.

Table 2 – The structure of type I secondary education



A: Algemeen secundair Onderwijs – General secondary education
T: Technisch secundair onderwijs – Technical secondary education
K: Kunst secundair onderwijs – Secondary education (arts)
B: Beroepssecundair onderwijs – Vocational secondary education
V/S: vervolmaking en/of specialisatie – advanced and/or specialized
KK: Korte kwalificatie – short path qualification
LK: Lange kwalificatie – long path qualification

[1] Getuigschrift basisonderwijs – certificate of secondary education
[2] Getuigschrift lager secundair – certificate of lower secondary education
[3] Getuigschrift hoger secundair – certificate of higher secondary education
[4] Kwalificatiegetuigschrift – certificate
[5] Bekwaamheidsdiploma – diploma

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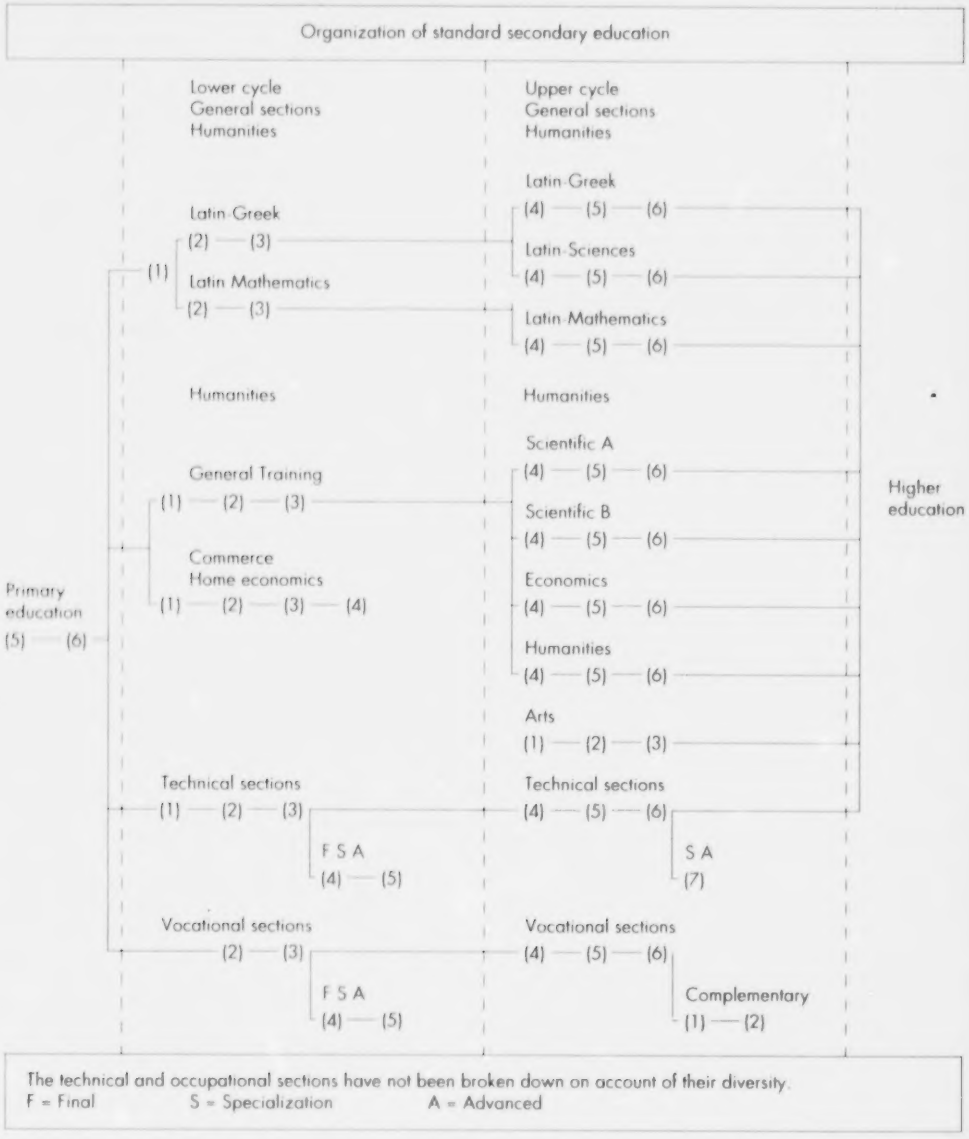
Table 3 – The structure of type II secondary education



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Appendix 3: Car sales in Belgium in 1990 and 1991 by car make

Car sales in Belgium in 1990 and 1991

	1990	%	1991	%
1. Opel	51,696	11.2	57,160	12.1
2. Volkswagen	48,538	10.5	57,619	12.2
3. Ford	43,406	9.4	41,596	8.8
4. Renault	41,848	9.1	49,226	10.4
5. Peugeot	38,039	8.2	39,325	8.3
6. Citroen	29,490	6.4	29,902	6.3
7. Toyota	28,851	6.2	29,806	6.3
8. Nissan	28,442	6.2	22,442	4.7
9. Audi	18,182	3.9	17,884	3.8
10. Mazda	17,808	3.9	15,050	3.2
11. Fiat	17,582	3.8	16,464	3.5
12. BMW	12,765	2.8	11,053	2.3
13. Mercedes	12,275	2.7	11,978	2.5
14. Mitsubishi	9,032	2.0	9,108	1.9
15. Volvo	8,419	1.8	9,327	2.0
16. Vaz Lada	7,561	1.6	8,645	1.6
17. Honda	6,368	1.4	6,953	1.5
18. Seat	6,318	1.4	7,510	1.6
19. Suzuki	5,516	1.2	4,779	1.0
20. Alfa Romeo	4,753	1.0	4,602	1.0
21. Lancia	3,983	0.9	3,080	0.7
22. Daihatsu	3,749	0.8	3,647	0.8
23. Rover	3,294	0.7	3,568	0.8
24. Subaru	3,020	0.7	2,788	0.6
25. Chrysler	1,849	0.4	1,773	0.4
26. Skoda	1,763	0.4	1,090	0.2
27. Saab	1,720	0.4	1,503	0.3
28. Hyundai	1,032	0.2	847	0.2
29. Chevrolet	747	0.2	625	0.1
30. Pontiac	679	0.1	559	0.1
31. Land Rover	589	0.1	627	0.1
32. Jeep	519	0.1	587	0.1
33. Jaguar	517	0.1	588	0.1
34. Porsche	500	0.1	530	0.1
35. Buick	275	0.1	158	0.0

Source: FEBIAC

PART 2:

1. Peugeot Talbot
2. Volvo
3. Ford
4. Mercedes

1. PEUGEOT TALBOT

Size of company: V

Make: Peugeot Talbot

Category of motor vehicle: A

Type of company: C

1. Basic information

The first case we selected is Ciac Service, an independent, private limited company, which is a recognized sales and repair shop (dealership). The company is located in the centre of Ghent.

As a dealership, the company supplies cars to local dealers and directly to customers. The company also provides maintenance and repair services for the cars that they sell. Local dealers also make use of the infrastructure or know-how of the repair shop.

The company is one of the largest in the sector in the Ghent region, and also in the Flemish part of Belgium. The repair shop and the related service and administration has a staff of 47. 19 people are employed in sales and distribution.

The company deals mainly in family cars up to a maximum of 3.5 tonnes. The brand names are mainly Peugeot and, to a lesser extent, Talbot. Due to its size, the company specializes in all parts: electronic, automatic transmission, engine, injection and ignition, suspension systems, exhaust system, car body, air conditioning. In addition, it specializes in alarm and mobile-phone systems.

Vocational training usually takes place externally, mostly at the car importer's centre (cfr. infra). Training also occurs in the company, especially training by suppliers.

The company estimates that an employee attends on average of three to five days' training a year. The main part of the training is technical (the company estimates ±95%), and 5% is management and marketing training.

2. Personnel management and vocational training

Ciac Service Ghent is part of a holding company comprising: Ciac Service (divided into Ciac Service Ghent and Ciac Service Aalst); Ciac Rent and Ovac. Ovac distributes Nissan cars.

All logistic support (accounting, personnel, administration, repair shop and warehouse) is provided by Ciac Service Ghent.

The holding company has no employees, it is purely a financial structure. The companies in the holding company employ approximately 100 people. Ciac Service Aalst employs 15 people. Ciac Rent and Ovac together employ about 19 people. Ciac Service Ghent has 66 employees and is the subject of this case study.

Thirty-five people are employed in the Ciac Service Ghent repair shop. This is divided into a service repair shop and a car body repair shop. In the car body repair shop, one woman is working as a salaried employee. Three administrative employees are linked to the repair shop. Nine people are employed in the warehouse (7 workers and 2 employees, one of whom is a manager).

The sales manager's department consists of a sales secretary, 4 female employees, 5 sales people and 1 receptionist. There is also an employee in charge of second hand cars and 6 workers who prepare cars for delivery.

A typical feature of the company is that they recruit from people leaving school. However, older employees with a lot of experience are also employed in the company. The company used to recruit mainly low-skilled or unskilled people. Now recruitment is directed at low-skilled and skilled persons on the labour market. All new employees begin at the bottom, doing very simple tasks. The company is also obliged to employ people with a "practical contract". Furthermore, the company also has students doing their practical period (practice). So the age structure of the company is somewhat polarized between younger people (under 30 years) and older people (above 40 years). This polarized age structure causes some problems in personnel management. Some people are clearly finishing their career by "tuning down" and have difficulties following new developments in the sector.

There are three employees of foreign origin (Moroccan and Algerian), but they all have Belgian nationality.

Recruitment qualification levels differ, depending on the various functions. For salesmen, there are very few qualification requirements. Candidates must be of good "character". During the past two years, people with post-secondary education qualifications have applied, but the company is not especially seeking to recruit at this level. Recently, someone with a marketing qualification joined the staff. It is possible for people in the sales department to continue their career in another function within the company, but this rarely happens. There is a large labour market for salesmen. There are also a lot of applicants for sales positions, with wide experience in other sectors where their job involved spending a lot of time in other countries. After some time, these people begin to search for a job, closer to the "family structure" and less "time-intensive". They want to have more time for their families. One of the main problems for the sector is that they cannot offer these people acceptable wages.

The employees in the repair shop generally have a "mechanics A2" certificate (higher secondary technical education). Foremen have a certificate "A1" (higher education), but someone with a "A1" certificate is not necessarily a good foreman. At present, there are two foremen in the company. This is linked to the workforce organization. Foremen need specific qualifications: they have to make decisions - whether a part has to be replaced or not; they must also be able to allocate the work efficiently. It was noticed that there are specific problems in the recruitment of workers. The average wages in the sector are Bfr 10,000 to 15,000 (ECU 200-300) lower than the average wages in the motor vehicle sector. Therefore, it is often difficult to retain a well-qualified mechanic. In the Ghent region, there is an important competitor, i.e. the Volvo truck assembly company.

Availability of bodywork mechanics and spray painters has improved. Some two years ago, it was impossible to find suitably qualified people. Since employment in general is falling, there is no longer a shortage of bodywork mechanics and spray painters and the level of recruitment has become higher.

A specialized office is involved in the recruitment procedure, and initial selection involves the personnel service selecting CVs or inviting some people for interview. They pay special attention to the ability to make contacts and social attitudes. A crucial question seems to be whether someone fits in the company.

The workforce is organized in two shift systems and the company is open 44 hours per week, while the working week is 36.5 hours. One shift, led by one of the foremen, works from Monday to Thursday. The other shift works from Tuesday to Friday. In this shift system, each shift has a long weekend every two weeks. This makes it necessary to have two foremen, but problems often occur due to absence (continuing vocational training, illness, leave) and it is not always possible to have a foreman in the repair shop.

3. Continuing vocational training

3.1 Actual situation

Staff generally participate in training programmes organized by the car importer. These training programmes are organized in line with:

- changes in a model;
- introduction of a new model.

Although the participation level of the company is rather high, staff remain employed in the same function, even if they follow several training programmes. A career in a car repair shop or in car sales is a very flat career. The main objectives in continuing vocational training programmes are updating technical knowledge and skills. Career planning within a car company is not an objective of vocational training. An employee in the body work department remains there for the rest of his career. A mechanic can, in some cases, reach the level of foreman.

In past years, the volume of training programmes has increased steadily. This trend is also anticipated in the future, as the car becomes more complex (micro-electronics) and new parts are introduced (mobile phones, catalytic converters).

A second reason why vocational training will increase, is the development of work intervals and work volume. Some years ago, a car needed to be serviced every 1,500 km and this meant half a day's work for one person. A more extended service involved a mechanic for a whole day. This has now changed to servicing every 3,000 or 5,000 km, with a tendency towards every 10,000 km, where the work is done in an hour and an extended service is completed in 2-3 hours. The volume of work is decreasing while the work interval has shortened.

No exact information on training programmes is available, but the company estimates that training programmes take place once a year in line with a car model change (2 days) or the introduction of a new model (3-4 days). The minimum number of employees that participate in these training programmes are the technical adviser of the company and the more highly skilled mechanics. Every two or three years there is also a training programme for electricians. The technical adviser and sometimes the foremen also participate in this programme. Training programmes for bodywork are decreasing. There is a tendency to commission manufacturers of paint work materials to organize these training programmes. For bodywork, the company is seeking suppliers who also provide training programmes. These "training programmes" are often "demonstrations".

Employees from the sales department also participate in training programmes on technical aspects of the different models. They need to have an up-to-date view of technical developments in order to perform their sales function well. Moreover, they participate in training programmes in which information is given on other brand names. So they know the exact differences between the products they sell and those sold by their competitors. Salesmen need to have some technical information on the competing brand names. There are also specific training programmes in sales techniques. These training programmes go beyond general sales techniques, by focusing on "car sales techniques". Target groups are new salesmen as well as experienced salesmen. This training programme is organized by an external institute.

Furthermore, the company has some company-specific initiatives. Sometimes staff participate in training programmes offered by the Vlerich School for Management (related to the University of Ghent). It involves training programmes such as management, marketing, sales, accounting, administration, value added tax, fiscal policy, informatics. Staff members are also permitted to attend training programme courses run by the Flemish Employment Service (VDAB, Vlaamse Dienst voor Arbeidsbemiddeling en Beroepsopleiding), such as MS DOS, administration. There are also follow-up colloquia and seminars to discuss specific items such as the environment, licences.

Company policy is such that every employee can draw attention to vocational training needs. For example if someone notices the announcement of particular training programmes that could be of general interest to the company, or if someone wants to participate in a training programme, this can be discussed with the personnel department.

In several areas, there is a tendency to use training programmes offered by suppliers. Potential suppliers are always asked to demonstrate their product. They are also asked if they provide specific training programmes. An example is the system the company used to find a supplier of spray cabins. New spray cabins not only imply a new way of working, the production technique also needs to be adapted to environmental regulations. Thus suppliers who offer training programmes have a greater chance of being selected by the company.

This strategy was also employed when the company started to specialize in the installation of mobile phones. In the past, this was sub-contracted, generally to mobile phone manufacturers. This was the most obvious strategy, because there was not a great demand for mobile phones. However, recently the company management noticed that the demand for mobile phones was increasing. At that time, the management decided to train their employees to install mobile phones without sub-contracting. Some suppliers of mobile phones were contacted, to explain the installation procedures and the company now installs the mobile phones itself, which has considerably reduced the customers' waiting time.

An important factor in recent developments seems to be self-tuition. This was not only very clearly mentioned by people responsible for training, but also by workers interviewed. Car producers often produce technical brochures, containing information on different models. In addition circulars, e.g. how a particular part has to be repaired or restored, are a widely-used information channel. The company stores this information systematically, and it can be consulted by anyone who needs it. Previously, the mechanics never consulted literature or written information. They seemed to think that consulting information was an indication that they were insufficiently qualified. Nowadays, attitudes are changing. The car is becoming more and more complex, and it is necessary to refer to information. If the company stores all available information in an easily accessible system it can be rapidly consulted.

This seems to be one of the problems for independent and small dealers. They have no time to organize all the available information; they do not want to make time for it or they do not consider it important. When they have a technical problem for which they have no solution and for which they cannot find information, they contact the larger dealers (dealerships) for technical support. Some interviewees clearly mentioned that this is an indication that they never consult documents.

An important development in the repair shop is that machines are becoming more expensive and more sophisticated. So machine-oriented training programmes are becoming more important (e.g. diagnostic equipment).

The decision as to who can participate in which training programme is taken by the after-sales director, who supervises the management of the repair shop, maintains contacts with the importer, ensures the circulation of technical documentation and the management of guarantee files. He makes decisions concerning training in relation to the needs of the company. These "needs" are in terms of training in electrics, electronics, and diagnostics. When employees are selected to attend a training programme, they are informed by the after-sales director. There is no discussion or consultation. There is also no tradition in involving trade unions in consultations concerning vocational training at company level. Consultation between social partners at company level (company works committee, safety and health committee, union delegation) in practice never concerns vocational training. During the interviews, it was stated that sometimes employees did not understand why they were selected to attend a training programme, but they did not look on it as an obligation. Mostly they are satisfied with selection to participate in training programmes. The employees interviewed were convinced that everyone, according to their function, had sufficient opportunities to participate in training programmes. However, they agreed that there are not enough training opportunities.

The main work in a car repair shop is currently diagnostics. This implies technical insight and some intelligence. All other tasks are rather simple jobs, e.g. oil change, replacing tyres and wheels, dismantling and assembling (e.g. the clutch), replacing the brakes, replacement of the accelerator cable, customer reception. These are jobs for which no special qualifications are necessary.

On the other hand, we have diagnostics. Once a fault is established, the other jobs are relatively simple: diagnostics indicate which part is malfunctioning, and if a part has to be replaced or repaired. We may, for example, look at the development of servicing. Some years ago, this was a major part of the work that had to be done. The car spent some hours in the service station and it could take up to an hour for the mechanic to reset the valves. The easiest work, the oil change, was the most important part of the job. So the mechanic who could complete this work quicker than other employees was seen as one of the best employees. He was an important figure in the production process. Now, an oil change takes about 20 minutes. So, if someone is a little bit faster than someone else, it is not so important. The important part of the production process is the work that is done by the mechanic. The mechanic who is able to establish a correct diagnosis is the pivot in the production process. However, working with diagnostic equipment requires training. Not everyone is able to work with diagnostic equipment. One has to learn to reason and to interpret. Car manufacturers are currently researching new interactive diagnostic equipment. Also, standardized systems are increasingly being used in training programmes, e.g. if the tension between point a and b is less than x, measure the tension between b and c. This tension must be y.

Establishing a correct diagnosis, even for complex and rare problems, is an important competitive advantage. This is one of the reasons why the company is investing so much in employee training. They need to have an up-to-date knowledge of all aspects of repair shop activities. If the company ceased training activities for one year, it would have little effect, but 5 or 6 years without training for employees would mean that the company could no longer be competitive. It is possible that investing so much in training for employees increases the costs for clients, compared to other repair shops (e.g. wage-costs), but equally, fault diagnosis and repair times are kept to a minimum, especially for complex and rare problems. So, this means that the customer's invoice could be higher if a repair shop did not invest in training.

With the example of servicing, it has been illustrated how the amount of work in repair shops has decreased. Another example is micro-electronics. Micro-electronic components are rarely repaired – mostly they have to be replaced. However, the remaining work is becoming more complex. Measurement equipment used to be relatively simple (voltage, number of revolutions), but under the influence of, for example, environmental norms, more complex measurement equipment is being introduced, e.g. the catalytic converter. Analyzing the car exhaust not only involves measuring the grade of CO, equally unburned HC and nitrogen oxides (NOx) have to be measured. Finally, there is the example of ignition and injection systems. These used to be two separate parts, but recently the systems were integrated. Thus, diagnosis and repair of this part has become a more complex task.

The requirements that are expected of a mechanic have become higher. This is also reflected in the way training programmes are established. Someone who has just left school, is not accepted as a proficient mechanic. He has to learn lot of things during his first years, and he has to be brought into the company's training system. The training systems have, according to those in charge of training programmes, changed from "rather theoretical" instruction to allowing course participants to become practically involved, e.g. fault detection. Simulation techniques are used for this purpose. Faults are simulated in several car models for detection via diagnosis. According to employees interviewed, there is still too little practice in the training policy. The most significant omission is that there are few opportunities to practice the things learned in a training session in the company itself.

3.2 The Peugeot Talbot "School", Belgium (PTB)

The most important form of training which staff members of Ciac Service Ghent participate in is organized by the Peugeot Talbot Belgium schools in Ukkel and Nijvel (region of Brussels). Currently, the Ukkel department formulates the technical training programmes, while the Nijvel department formulates commercial training programmes. Both departments will eventually unite in Nijvel, because the infrastructure in Ukkel is becoming too small.

3.2.1 Training programmes in Ukkel

The basic criterion that is used to establish training programmes is "satisfying the customers". The work does not stop when a car is sold. The customer also wants to know how his car can be repaired, how he can be helped, etc. If the "after-sales" department does not function, the sales department will have problems. This is the logic that is used in establishing technical training programmes. In any case, it is easier to keep a customer than to make or search for new clients. Customers have to be kept by providing them with a good service.

The training programme content depends on the nature of the product. There are changes in a model that do not require additional training (e.g. restyling). Other changes may require additional training. The introduction of the catalytic converter is a good example, this kind of training is more of an "information session". The content is fixed, the question of what information should or should not be given is not relevant. For other initiatives, such as elementary product knowledge, this question is

relevant, because the training manager determines the content of a training programme himself.

The provision of training programmes is not just determined by the car manufacturer, e.g. when a new model is introduced. Training programmes can be established because certain needs are detected, e.g., when companies mention specific training needs or when technical inspectors detect certain needs. Technical inspectors are staff members who are "on the road". They are the direct contact with the dealerships and the dealers. Mostly there is an interaction between both systems (direct request for training programmes by dealers and visits of technical inspectors). When a need for certain training programmes is detected, there is still a possibility of a systematic questionnaire to dealerships and dealers to ask if they are interested, how many people would they send, etc. The offer of training opportunities is, in other words, tuned to the needs of the network of dealers and dealerships.

The table below contains a list of the training programmes available:

Training programme	Duration
Product knowledge	2 days
How to use documentation	1 day
Carburettor	2 days
Injection systems	3 days
Diagnostics	1 day
Diesel engines	2 days
Sliding rook adjustment	1/2 day
Adjustment of rear suspension	1/2 day
Alignment (wheels)	1 day
Changing gear box	2 days
ABS systems	2 days
4 - 4 traction	1 day
Electronic measurement techniques	2 days
Electronics (basics)	2 days
Diagnosis – scheme-reading	2 days
Electronic applications	2 days
Alternator	1 day
Air conditioning	2 days

Training programmes at the manufacturer's main training school in France are available to everyone but, in practice, this is seldom followed up. Examples of training programmes organized in France, are: strategy, management of daily activities, repair shop management, invoicing, guarantee and customer service, customer reception, commercial attitudes, car body, etc.

For some training programmes, prompted by changes in a model or the introduction of a new model, some people attend the central training school in France, following which they circulate this information in Belgium. For changes in the 1993 models for example, five people went to France: the training school manager, two instructors, and two technical assistants. At present, the training programmes have started in Belgium, organized by these five people.

We will now look at the most important development in the Peugeot Talbot Belgium training programmes since 1987. The carburettor training programme has been superseded by the increasing importance of injection systems. The training programme "injection systems" lasted one day, but it has increased to three days. A completely new training programme is diagnostics. This training programme covers "learning to handle specific Peugeot Talbot diagnostic equipment" (machine oriented training programme). Sliding roof adjustment and adjustment of the rear suspension are also new training programmes. The training course on gear box changing is now less important. It used to be 3 days, but is now only two days because the number of types of gear boxes has decreased. ABS-systems and 4 × 4 drive are also new training programmes. Diagnostics – scheme-reading and electronic applications – are new training programmes that have to be interpreted against the context of the increasing importance of the diagnostic and technical insight of the mechanic. The dynamo training programme has decreased from two days to one day. A training programme was set up on air-conditioning installed after production by specialized repair shops. Today dealerships and dealers are confronted with cars in which air-conditioning is already installed.

The training programmes are, in general, a combination of theory and practice. The practice is, as mentioned above, a very important part, the aim being to learn how to detect faults by practical experience. Defect simulators are used during the training programmes. These are car models that are installed on a panel and different switches can be operated to generate defects. Cars that are no longer roadworthy are also used for training purposes.

Didactic materials or simulation materials are developed together with a technical school (e.g. a Higher Technical Institute). Peugeot Talbot Belgium supplies the material (e.g. cables, different brake systems, etc.), and the technical school uses this material to develop a simulation model for use in the school.

Peugeot Talbot Belgium's participation in vocational training is encouraged by a system developed by its French Headquarters called "challenge", which has been in existence for the past 10 years. The principle is simple. It is a competition between dealers and dealerships. Those who achieve high scores in training participation, motivation and presentation can win a prize. The value of prizes has increased over the years (e.g. trips to Florida). The prizes to be won are announced at the start of a campaign

and it is up to the dealers or the dealerships to make the necessary effort. At the end of the year there is also a premium for the dealers, linked to the challenge system.

The costs borne by dealers and dealerships when their employees attend Peugeot Talbot Belgium training courses are limited to their staff's wages, travel and subsistence costs.

Peugeot Talbot Belgium has a very good relationship with Ciac Service Ghent. The company has a reputation of being aware of its vocational training needs, and for allowing a high proportion of its staff to attend training courses. A special characteristic of the case is that the company itself takes care of the mailing (invitation to participate in vocational training). As mentioned at the beginning of this study, Ciac Service Ghent supplies cars to several dealers in the region. These dealers often have problems which they refer to Ciac Service Ghent. To prevent this system being abused, and to encourage the dealers to participate in vocational training, Ciac Service Ghent has established a mailing list for training courses to enable the company to invite its dealers to participate, for example, in a training course on injection systems. Dealers who do not attend, may then be criticized if they continually seek advice on systems etc.

Invitations or mailshots regarding training organized by Peugeot Talbot Belgium are less personalized and less compulsory. Vocational training is compulsory, but in practice, there are no sanctions. Sanctions can only be taken against one person: the technical advisor of a company. The technical advisor has to be recognized by the central training school, usually on the recommendation of the director of the Peugeot Talbot Belgium school. This advice is based on an evaluation by the director. In practice, everyone is free to establish a personnel and vocational training policy. Only the technical advisor must have attained a certain level, and is appointed on that basis. Once recognized, the technical advisor must attend training courses to be 100% up-to-date. To assess the level of a technical advisor for a company, the number and degree of complexity of repairs in a company are taken into account. If a company is small, a technical advisor must be more versatile.

A basic principle is that the technical advisor imparts knowledge within the company, but this is seldom established in companies. This aspect was mentioned spontaneously during the employee interviews. When employees attend, for example, a training course that might involve additional skills, they need active support from the technical advisor to gain experience after the course. This support structure is either too weak or insufficiently developed. Employees stressed that there were too few opportunities in the company to gain experience in what they had learned during training sessions. To obtain this experience they need to be supervised by the technical advisor or a foreman.

The technical advisor has another important role. Once every three months there is a meeting of all technical advisors, where all the problems that occur with the different models are discussed, e.g. when Ciac Service Ghent has clients that repeatedly complain about the same defects, this can then be discussed at the meeting. This "downstream" information flow is used to determine the content of training programmes, or to determine the content of circulars or other written documents. During these meetings, problems are discussed and possible solutions sought.

When future policies have to be established, some factors are of particular importance. Firstly, there is the fact that the work volume is decreasing. This is mentioned several times in this study. It is important that the decrease in work volume induces a polarization between simple tasks and tasks for which insight, reasoning and interpretation capacities are very important.

A second major trend is the importance and development of diagnostics. This is and will become the nucleus of the 'after-sales' department. Diagnosis is the critical factor, other matters are either simple or administrative. For the future we have to take into account the rise of interactive diagnostic systems. This implies a certain standardization in the way of working imposed by the car manufacturers. The advantage of the interactive diagnostic systems is that more people will be able to work with it, but this will require the presence of more highly skilled employees in the repair shop. Standardization does not mean that low-skilled or unskilled workers will be able to make an efficient diagnosis.

The development of new materials in cars (recycling problems) does not imply new problems for the car repair sector. There will be a greater effect on the car demolition sector which will have to be reorganized. In the car repair sector it will mean that work will become more a question of replacement rather than repair as electronic components and the new materials are not subject to the same wear and tear.

A fall in the number of establishments is also expected. There are two reasons for this. Firstly there is the phenomenon of family companies, which nowadays are "third generation companies". After the Second World War, the family founded a company, this was a growth period. The second generation had to manage the company efficiently, but this did not happen everywhere. In a lot of cases the second generation rested on the laurels of the first generation. Thus problems are arising for the third generation: financial reserves are gone, the know-how of the

employees is out of date, there is no real development policy, etc. A great number of these third generation companies will disappear, because they are not prepared for the actual challenges. A second reason for the falling number of companies is due to environmental standards regulations. Car repair companies have to invest in new equipment, etc. This applies not only to the repair shop (e.g. exhaust measurement equipment), but also to the actual location of the company. Car repair companies in city centres must comply for example, with new standards concerning the spraying of cars, likewise gas and noise emissions have to meet the regulations or the company will be forced to close down. Petrol stations are not the subject of this study, but it should be noted that a lot of dealerships and dealers have a petrol station and new, strict, regulations mean that a lot of companies will have to curtail these activities.

The case studied is a large, efficiently managed company. Therefore the company has been able to implement all the necessary changes. The planned renewal of the spray cabins is an example. The company has already made plans to train its employees on the new equipment.

3.2.2 Training programmes in Nijvel

In 1987, Peugeot Talbot Belgium had about 83 dealerships and 400 agents or dealers. Not all these companies are profitable points of sale and so the basic philosophy of vocational training offered to salesmen and managers is "working efficiently". This aim does not mean that less profitable companies will be made more efficient, but less profitable points of sale will gradually be closed. Since 1991, there has been stagnation in car sales statistics. There is, thus, no point in aiming to achieve higher sales figures in less profitable forms.

The success of the network is followed up by Peugeot Talbot Belgium via training courses on profitability and investment. The aim of these training programmes is to establish an efficient network of about 100 dealerships and 283 agents or dealers. The investment programme deals, for example, with themes such as "providing a better service", "the company image", "location of the company", and "showroom".

There is also a specific training programme entitled "working efficiently". This training programme takes 2 1/2 days. During this period, employees are taught to identify problems, analyze the problem and, finally, to find a solution to the problem.

Since car sales are stagnating, a lot of attention is paid to the training programme "loyalty and satisfaction". The aim of this training programme is to encourage salesmen to pay attention to customer retention. Salesmen are therefore trained in how to manage customer files. Far too frequently salesmen are unfamiliar with their customers. There is not enough follow-up etc., so it is easy for customers to change to other brand names.

"Product knowledge" is another training course directed at salesmen. During this programme (twice a year for 1 day), information is provided not only on own models, but also about the "products" of competitors. A salesman has to know about the advantages and disadvantages of the product he or she sells, and how the product can be compared with competitors' products.

The most important new training programme introduced since 1987 is a training programme of five days' duration aimed at new salesmen. The content of the training programme is:

- presentation of the group or company. The aim is to encourage new salesmen, by making clear that they are not in an isolated position. A salesman is not a stand alone individual; he or she is part of a larger structure with a lot of logistic support
- knowledge of the product (2 days)
- how to establish a good presentation of the product (in the showroom, during a trial run, etc.)
- basic skills: attitude, knowledge of languages, psychology
- problems of part-exchange of cars when selling new ones: which factors must be assessed to offer a price; how high can the value of a car be estimated, etc.
- handling commercial documents (1/2 day), e.g. contracts, manuals, registration documentation.

The importance of this training programme for new salesmen is related to the recruitment problems that exist in relation to the position of salesmen. The sales function has a bad image. Years ago, people who could not find a job elsewhere, often found a job as a salesman in the sector. This is the reason why this function has such a bad image. However, in the interim, a lot of things have changed but the poor image of the post remains. Thus, at present, there is a lack of young people who are willing to do this job.

However, there is also a high rate of turnover in this position. The main problem is, therefore, to find young people, to encourage them and create loyalty to the company, by giving them amongst other things, good basic and continuing vocational training.

2.

The school in Nijvel also organizes telephone training programmes, and they are busy developing a training programme for managers.

An external institute is involved in some training programmes. The choice is made by Peugeot Talbot Belgium. The fact that they can choose freely from external companies to organize and execute training programmes has advantages, e.g. for some programmes another institute was selected because Peugeot Talbot Belgium felt that the existing training programme was outdated and needed reviewing. Therefore a new external institute was sought. Examples of training programmes that are organized by external institutes are "sales techniques" (6 days over a period of 4-6 months), "how to close a contract" (3 days), "marketing" and "telemarketing".

To conclude this section, mention should be made of the views of the researchers regarding future issues concerning vocational training. The sales function clearly needs to be reviewed. This could be achieved by higher remuneration, by introducing better incentives, but especially by changing the company's publicity policy. The usual way of advertising is based on budgets designated for publicity, promotion, participation in exhibitions, open door activities, etc. By using these strategies, the profit margins are dwindling and the sales budget becomes too small to reward salesmen at a reasonable level. However, this can be viewed from another angle. The salesman can be seen as a focus for the image of the company. A good salesman (good service, an agreeable service for the customers etc.) can be a better "advertising strategy" than what is being used, i.e. spending money without a real policy. Reference should also be made to the differences between European and Japanese personnel policy. In Europe, employees are seen as a "necessary evil", whilst in Japan the "human aspect" has been developed.

The sales function also needs reorientation. Not only the quantity but also the quality of sales is important. This will be the subject of new training programmes. In the future, salesmen will have to be able to give more and better service, to better organize customer reception in line with customers' wishes, especially since manufacturers are practically able to make cars to measure (small series, flexible production organization).

A shortage in the availability of training programmes requiring more attention is a training programme for "dealers' successors". Reference should be made also to the above-mentioned problem of "third generation repair shops". Consideration needs to be given to vocational training in a "pre-dealer situation". If initial training is only organized at the time when someone becomes a dealer, then problems are likely to occur concerning the basic philosophy of working efficiently.

An important challenge for the future is the question of whether different brand names have to function separately in terms of vocational training. Joining together to finance and organize vocational training, is a matter which is currently being discussed by some manufacturers. If this initiative could be established, then larger budgets might be available to organize vocational training activities. This would improve professionalism and it should be possible to maintain brand-related methods of organization. For example, in the Netherlands, a training institute exists which organizes training programmes for employees (among other salesmen) of different brand names. Through cooperation, training programmes, for example "showroom", can be organized successively for different manufacturers. The necessary cars can be supplied by the participating manufacturers. This cooperation means that training quality can be improved, and every manufacturer can benefit.

Appendix

Personal information: worker A
Age: 41 years
Length of service: 24 years
Education: (no documents in file)
Position in company: Electrician
Vocational training: Several sessions Peugeot Talbot, Belgium:
- electrics and electronics (5 days)
- dynamo (2 days, 5 years ago)
- "changes in model"

Personal information: worker B
Age: 39 years
Length of service: 22 years
Education: Lower secondary technical education (A3)
1 year specialization petrol engine
1 year specialization diesel engine
Position in company: Mechanic (specialist engines)
Vocational training: Yearly PTB "changes in model"
- 1979: diesel (PTB) (2+3 days)
- 1980: general car techniques (14 days)

Personal information: worker C
Age: 35 years
Length of service: 12 years
Education: Lower secondary technical education (A3)
Higher secondary technical education (A2)
Position in company: Foreman
Technical advisor Peugeot
Specialist diagnosis
Vocational training: PTB – regular training as "technical advisor"
yearly "changes in model"
PTB – electrics (2 days) and electronics (2 days)
1979: general car techniques (PTB, 14 days)

Personal information: worker D
Age: 27 years
Length of service: 3 years
Education: Lower secondary vocational education (A4)
Apprenticeship contract car repair shop (4 years) monitored by small business centre (1981–1985)
Position in company:
Vocational training: "changes in model"

Personal information: worker E
Age: 31 years
Length of service: 14 years
Education: Lower secondary technical education (A3)
1 year specialization petrol engines
1 year specialization diesel engines
Position in company: Mechanic
Vocational training: diesel engines and injection pumps (PTB, 2×2 days)
how to use BIP and TEP (= diagnosis equipment) (2 days)
yearly "changes in model"

Personal information: worker F
Age: 55 years
Length of service: 34 years
Education: 3 years training car mechanic
3 years evening training – car mechanic B2
4 years evening training – car mechanic B1 (no certificate)
Position in company: Receptionist and foreman (part-time)
Vocational training: until 1988 yearly "changes in model"
between 1970 and 1980 several training programmes injection systems, diesel engines (PTB – 2 days)

Personal information: worker G
Age: 53 years
Length of service: 35 years
Education: (no information in file)
Position in company: Mechanic (specialist gearbox and rolling parts)
Vocational training: from 1975 to 1985: several PTB training programmes:
general mechanics and gearbox
yearly "changes in model"

2. VOLVO

1. General description of the case study

The second case study in Flanders looked at the company Van De Peer n.v. in Zandhoven. This is an independent limited company, but it is also a recognized Volvo repair centre, concentrating on repairs and bodywork, with a limited amount of sales activity. Van De Peer works with two training centres: Accinauto training centre and Volvo Cars Belgium training centre. Accinauto is the importer of Glasurit car paint, and distributes paint accessories such as spraying cabins, pistols etc.

2. General description of the company

2.1 Some important details

Van De Peer is a SME (small and medium-sized enterprise) which carries out the maintenance of Volvo cars. The company is a Volvo service point. It also sells and maintains Mercedes delivery vans, and in an emergency it will look at a Volvo lorry as well. The company is located on the Boutersem industrial estate in the commune of Zandhoven.

2.2 Brief history and company strategy

The proprietor started out some ten years ago as a mechanic in a Volvo garage. The garage was suffering from the proprietors' family problems, which meant that in reality Mr. Van De Peer ran it single-handed. When the garage finally closed he started his own business, mainly repairing Volvos, in a shed on a piece of land belonging to his family. The business grew rapidly. It could not expand into the surrounding residential area, because there was not enough space and it was impossible to keep within the local environmental restrictions. Van de Peer moved his business to the Boutersem industrial estate, just outside the centre of Zandhoven.

Prior to this Volvo had already contacted the garage, because they had heard that Van de Peer was running a good business. He was offered a dealership contract, but he chose not to accept it. A dealership contract imposes quite strict rules, e.g. concerning sales[2], but he wanted to concentrate mainly on service. Van de Peer succeeded in getting a contract from Volvo as a 'recognized maintenance point'. This means that he sells or uses original Volvo parts, that he stocks and uses a sufficient number of spare parts, that he subscribes to the technical documentation and that his employees are properly trained.

He maintains good relations with a tyre centre and a Mercedes garage, because Volvo do not make any delivery vans. Van de Peer's major customers buy Mercedes delivery vans from him, and he also sells Volvos. The cars which are sold are ordered from an authorised dealer, but sales only represent a very small part of the total business, and the proprietor is the only person involved in sales. Most cars are sold to customers who have their servicing done at Van De Peer's and want to buy a new car from him; so he only sells to meet his customers' requirements. Because sales only represent a small part of the overall activity and because he is not bound to any quota, he only needs a very small showroom (2 cars), and he does not have to offer any reductions in the price of cars (it is better not to sell than to sell without making a profit, but large dealers cannot always put this philosophy into practice). There are currently 6 people (including the proprietor) working for the company. There is only limited use of modern technology, although of course there is modern technology in the cars themselves, so appropriate diagnostic equipment is necessary. There is also modern technology in the bodywork department: a modern spraying cabin is being built.

This company provides total car maintenance, from lubrication to repairs to very serious damage. During the period of the study, the bodywork department was being reorganized. In order to conform with future environmental regulations the spraying cabin had to be equipped with a number of appliances, so spraying was being subcontracted out for the time being. Apart from this, when he moved the garage-owner took the possible future regulations in every conceivable area into account, so as to avoid any unpleasant surprises later.

The garage-owner considers that the main keys to the business are the impeccable quality of his service and work, flexible opening hours (open until 20.00) and well-trained employees.

2.3 Structure of the company

There are six people working in the company. The proprietor is responsible for sales and personnel management, and whenever necessary he also works in the repair shop.

His wife does the administrative work such as invoicing, but the bookkeeping is subcontracted out. There is also a foreman.

2.4 Personnel

Apart from the proprietor and his wife there are four employees: three men and a woman.

There are two mechanics who carry out all the maintenance work on the cars, right up to preparing the car for bodywork or spraying. One of the mechanics is the foreman, and work is discussed with him at the beginning and end of

[2] Dealers always have to sell 120 cars per year. Volvo keeps back 3% of the margin from every sale, and if the quota is reached this percentage is paid back – otherwise they keep it. They also have to find a sales area which conforms to a number of conditions in terms of both size and design.

the working day. There is a bodywork mechanic who is responsible for all bodywork and can also carry out minor servicing or simple repairs if necessary. Finally, there is a female employee who takes care of maintaining the repair shop, keeping it clean and tidy, cleaning the cars and taking cars to the vehicle inspection service if required. This female employee does not do any work associated with motor mechanics. We will refer to her here as the female employee in charge of repair shop maintenance.

All employees are under 35 years of age. There are no foreign employees.

The repair shop maintenance female employee works part-time, and the other employees work full-time on a 39 hour week basis. The garage is usually open from 09.00 until 20.00, and operates from 09.00 to 17.00 and on Saturday mornings. For the last three hours in the evening the repair shop is always manned by one of the three mechanics. For this purpose the bodywork mechanic can also carry out basic repairs, so the three men can work with maximum flexibility. Employees are always paid for this overtime. Apart from this there is also normal overtime when there is a heavy workload, and time off in lieu is given informally for this.

Since there are no car assembly or manufacturing companies in the area around Zandhoven, there is virtually no risk of the company losing good workers to the firms offering much higher wages in the manufacturing or assembly sector. Also a small company like this has the relative advantage of a pleasant atmosphere and the pleasure of seeing clear results from the work: transforming a badly damaged car into one that looks as good as new. In addition to their wages, the workers also expect tips which are sometimes as high as Bfr 500, and they also get free cars: within the company it can happen that one of the employees is given a 'crashed' car and allowed to do it up in the repair shop in his free time. Spare parts from cars which have been written off are also sometimes given to employees to repair their own cars. They also earn additional money working on their friends' cars during their time off in lieu.

At the moment the employee who was recruited most recently, the female employee in charge of repair shop maintenance, is proving to be a heavy financial burden on the company. However, Van De Peer takes the line that it is better to have manpower in reserve all the time, rather than having to recruit a new employee in a mad rush when there is a busy period. A second reason for recruiting this female employee is that customers regularly come and follow the work being done in the repair shop.

Bringing customers into the repair shop is part of a strategy to create a friendly atmosphere both among the workers, and between them and the customers. Also a clean, open repair shop is more likely to inspire trust.

The foreman-mechanic has completed an A3 motor mechanics course, and has a great deal of experience with other types of cars. The other mechanic has had similar training. The cleaning lady has attended domestic science school. It was consciously decided not to recruit a car mechanic for repair shop maintenance work, in order to avoid over-qualification and any arguments or discord. Requirements for the post were a 'B' type driving licence and an honest character: after all the job does include driving other peoples' cars around.

The company prefers to recruit a candidate only after he/she has held a holiday job in the company, which gives them a chance to see if he or she fits in with the spirit of the company. Spontaneous applications which come in from time to time are often used in the recruitment process. There is no shortage in the labour market, certainly not for bodywork mechanics, but good workers are difficult to find. One of the main problems here is that many workers are insufficiently motivated. They come to 'put in their hours' and they go when the time is up, not when the work is finished. Another important factor in recruitment is the candidate's willingness to attend courses. The proprietor makes independent decisions about recruitment and selection.

3. Ongoing training

3.1 Current situation

Van de Peer does not undertake training himself, this is always 'subcontracted out'.

3.2.1 Training at Accinauto (Glasurit)

Accinauto is an independent distributor of Glasurit car paint and accessories such as spraying cabins, pistols, filters, etc. The accessories can also be used for different paints other than Glasurit car paint. The training courses are given by the Accinauto training centre, which is a more or less independent part of the importer Accinauto, but it has recently expanded to become the main subsidiary activity.

The courses which are given by Glasurit are not professional courses or management courses. Accinauto does not impose any obligation whatsoever to take these courses – they are taken on a completely voluntary basis. An exception must be made here for courses which manufacturers commission from Accinauto for their dealers (see below) but this is not the case for Van De Peer. The attendees' knowledge is not tested beforehand. If it is found that someone cannot keep up properly, they are given special attention. According to those in charge of the courses, many teachers from

schools and professional training centres also take their courses. There is no special policy for minorities, such as women and immigrants: they are neither encouraged nor refused. This is directly linked with the open and completely voluntary nature of the courses.

The courses at Accinauto are specialized courses covering the use of a certain paint or a certain accessory. They are intended for people in the trade who already have considerable technical knowledge.

This can be illustrated using a few examples. There is a one-day course on painting plastics, a one-day course on touching-up lightly damaged metallic bodywork, a two-day course on fast repairs and subsequent correction of faults. Sometimes there are even longer courses, for example covering the use of a spraying cabin.

The courses always begin with a brief theoretical explanation (about two hours). After this the trainees are taken to the repair shop. Here they are shown what they will be learning to do, and then trainees are able to practice themselves, using several 'models'. The courses are limited to groups of ten persons on average, and they are given at the Koolmijnenkaai/Quai des Charbonnages in Brussels. Courses are completely free, and there is not even a charge for the materials used or the meal which is provided.

The course packages find their way to customers in two ways.

The first of these, which is the most common, is that candidate participants (usually Glasurit customers but also users of other brands) are informed about the courses through the network of representatives who regularly visit bodywork repair shops and present the packages. The bodywork repairers are then completely free to take them up or not, and there is no pressure of any kind. Those who are interested are given a list of forthcoming courses available. They can pass this on to their colleagues if they wish. The representatives visit regularly enough so that customers will not miss any courses.

Another channel is the car importers. Now and again they organize courses at Glasurit (assuming that their cars are sprayed with Glasurit paint) which are then more or less compulsory for the dealers or agents. This is part of the car manufacturers' strategy to get as much bodywork done by dealers as possible.

The official aim of the training courses is to provide the bodywork repairers with up-to-date knowledge and acquaint them with new products and techniques at regular intervals. However, it is not difficult to see that this is inevitably part of their sales strategy.

The training packages are put together on the basis of a form of constant questioning of the participants and companies visited by the representatives. After a course or during a visit by a representative, it is possible to evaluate the course and make suggestions for other courses. Other courses are then set up on the basis of these suggestions. These might deal with a more general problem rather than being specifically associated with a new product. In this way Accinauto keeps its finger constantly on the pulse of the needs which exist. Courses are also set up when new products come out, such as a specialized spraying cabin or a new kind of dryer, or new product groups, such as water-based paints for example. In the last case, the course might include products or equipment which are only indirectly linked, for example if a particular paint requires a certain kind of drying equipment.

Developments since 1987 can only be understood in the light of the questions which participants and companies are asked. During this period there have been constant changes in the range of courses on offer, but in the last five years there has not been very much expansion in terms of numbers. An estimated 1,500 people are trained each year.

The course design is not altered to fit in with modern technology. The changes have not been drastic enough: new types of paint still have to be sprayed, and even in a high-tech cabin the spraying is still done with a pistol.

3.2.2 Training at Volvo

At Volvo Cars Belgium, training comes under the 'Sales & Dealers' department. Besides Sales & Dealers there are also marketing and administrative departments. Volvo Cars Belgium imports Volvo passenger cars.

There are two kinds of courses given at Volvo: management courses and technical courses.

The management training courses are intended for the dealers themselves. There is a need for training among these people, because they are often owners whose business has grown into an SME and who have themselves moved up into the job of managing director. Many of them have not kept up with the times, and they are not trained to do a manager's job. They are provided with training in human resources techniques and principles and in marketing etc. A training cycle of this kind is organized once a year.

A junior programme is also provided for those about to take over SME's and family companies. This course is also provided once a year.

For Volvo, the dealer is the core of the training programme: without a good dealer there is not

much point in training workers. The company follows a kind of top-down principle, although it is not referred to in this way. Knowledge is distributed first to the top, and then lower down.

These dealers do not always have a good training background. According to information from Volvo, 20% of dealers are completely set in their ways and are not willing to open their minds to new ideas. 60% of the dealers are prepared to take courses, provided they are given some motivation, and good results are obtained with this group. About 20% of the dealers do not really need any training, and it is possible to work with them very easily.

The dealers attend the training course voluntarily, but once they have started the course they do have to commit themselves to follow it through to the end. The training courses are organized in a very practical way: they run in three blocks of three days, with a 2-day break in between in which the dealers can test the information they have been given in the real-life situation of their own garage. The training days themselves are also oriented towards the practical side, and they work on the repair shop principle.

For Volvo's purposes Belgium is divided into three districts, with a district manager and a technical controller for each district. Both of these regularly visit all the dealers, and they know their dealers very well. The district managers have some say in the design of the training courses. Volvo Cars Belgium draws up a course programme, and once this begins to take shape it is discussed with the district managers. When the programme is completed, the dealers are invited on the basis of the district manager's evaluation of the importance and design of the course, and the need which exists among various dealers. These district managers sometimes give individual training courses if a dealer has specific problems.

The courses described above are not for garage-owners like Van De Peer who have maintenance contracts.

Besides these management courses, sales training courses are also provided. There is an introductory package for new dealers, which lasts a few days and is organized according to demand. As far as possible this tries to take into account the requirements expressed by the dealers. There is also an advanced sales training course – a kind of finishing course which follows the introductory package. It takes a few days and is organized once per year. Finally there is an annual course in fleet sales. All the courses which have been mentioned so far are free and voluntary, apart from the fleet sales course (Bfr 1,500) and the introductory course (compulsory). As far as the management course is concerned, it is the dealers who request it. Only the presentations of new products are compulsory. The bonus which is sometimes awarded at the end of the sales year (actually a kind of reimbursement) depends on the sales figures, meeting the organizational conditions and taking product training courses. In this way there is a 'gentle pressure' to take some of the courses.

We can find a good example of this 'gentle pressure' when a dealer recruits a new salesman. When a dealer decides to recruit an extra salesman, Volvo may sometimes pay that salesman's salary for six months if Volvo considers it necessary to stimulate sales in a certain region, and provided two conditions are fulfilled. The first of these is that the salesman takes a basic sales course at Volvo. The second is that Volvo Cars Belgium has some say in the recruitment. In practice the dealer is given a standard advertisement, and he makes minor changes and publishes it in the newspaper. He sends the responses to Volvo, where an initial selection is made. Volvo then presents the dealer with about seven candidates, who then makes the final choice.

Besides the management training courses there is one more kind of training which is not directly linked with motor mechanics, namely the after-sales service course. This is a technical-administrative course which introduces people to Volvo's computerized administration system. Volvo has a software package which it uses with all its dealers (Volvo Data System) and which allows direct communication with Volvo Cars Belgium by modem and processes all administration. This course is given when the system is installed. For garages with a service contract, it is not necessary to purchase this system: contact with Volvo Cars Belgium takes place through the dealer or agent on which that service point is dependent.

Besides management and sales courses there are also technical courses.

There are compulsory courses twice a year, where the new items in the product range are presented. These courses are free.

There is a second series of courses which mainly cover technical innovations to the cars of a kind which do not immediately entail a change in the Volvo range. Often training courses of this kind are given in collaboration with suppliers (e.g. tyre suppliers) and even with the VDAB professional course (mainly for car electrical systems). Technical innovations include not only innovations in the cars themselves, but also in parts or accessories.

For example courses were given recently about the new computer-operated diagnostic equipment. These courses are very thorough and very extensive. The employee has to be able to think along the same lines as the computer. Van De Peer used an example to illustrate this. When a

diagnosis shows up a fault in seven cables operating parts which are not connected together, it could be that these faults are generated by a faulty connection to an earth cable linked to all seven cables. The diagnostics computer does not recognize faults of this kind, so the mechanic must be able to think logically and interpret the faults reported by the computer. Another example of a course is the one which covers a modern method for attaching the windscreen, using a certain kind of adhesive rather than rubber strips. Since the windscreen is so important for the rigidity of the bodywork, the course was about more than just adhesives.

These courses are very specialized. They last five to six days and are free. The courses are compulsory, and one to three people must be present from each agency (dealer plus dependent service points). The technical inspector from Volvo Cars Belgium regularly visits all dealers, monitors attendance at technical courses and checks that every garage has access to sufficient technical knowledge about all parts.

Invitations to these training courses are sent out to agencies, who in turn have to inform the service points. There is no analysis of the mechanics' prior knowledge. The technical inspector and the agent with his service points know the people they work with and can judge independently which of them are best suited for a technical course. There is a certain order or cycle which has to be respected in taking these courses, and the technical inspector keeps records for this purpose.

Technical courses are all designed at Volvo Cars Belgium. There is no systematic means of questioning mechanics or dealers for this purpose. Courses are set up when innovations are introduced. However, in practice the technical inspectors are consulted about any shortcomings, but there is no room in the budget for the provision of more general training courses. There is a procedure for on-the-job adjustments, whenever there is a need for it. These courses are free.

Besides the two basic packages and on-the-job adjustments, a basic course is also provided for new mechanics. There is no provision to cover wage expenses, as is the case with sales personnel.

During the last five years more and more courses have been given by Volvo. Volvo Cars Belgium has a standard imposed on it from Sweden, which requires five days of training per employee per year, but this is difficult to achieve if the quality has to be guaranteed as well. For this reason Volvo prefers to give courses in small groups according to the repair shop principle. This means that less people can be trained than would be possible on mass courses. It would be very easy to meet the Volvo standards using mass courses.

Training courses cost Volvo Cars Belgium Bfr 16 to 17 million per year. Volvo does not consider this very much compared with its other costs. Nevertheless a very great deal of attention is given to training, and in difficult times like the present the training budget is never reduced. A well-trained body of dealers and mechanics is an important condition for sales.

It is also clear that some Volvo mechanics and dealers are currently having difficulty keeping up with technical developments. For this reason the length of the courses given when new models are presented has been increased from two to three days. This was done for the first time with the 850 model, which is known as one huge high-tech gadget on wheels. This year a basic course in electrics is being considered for the first time.

Van De Peer has a very high opinion of the Volvo courses. The only criticism on his side is that there is sometimes too much hype associated with the presentation of new cars, "When you explain to a mechanic how beautifully a decorative strip enhances the attractive profile of a car, he will just ask if it might fall off, and if it does, how he has to stick it on again". If possible Van De Peer tries to send his mechanics on courses together so that these interfere with work as little as possible.

Volvo's courses are usually given in Brussels, and sometimes in Ghent. The dealers/concessionaries are given a calendar with the training courses which are planned.

4. The company's training policy

This company attaches a great deal of importance to training, and hence also to a willingness to be trained. One example of this is the case of the bodywork mechanic/sprayer.

The bodywork mechanic originally worked on an English army base, but after they withdrew he took a VDAB course (in Herentals), with a period of work experience in this company. His employer was particularly satisfied with both his knowledge and his attitude to the work. The bodywork mechanic in question regularly came out with "trade secrets" which it would have been virtually impossible to pick up spontaneously. For example he had learned how to deal with a pointed dent (e.g. from a stone strike), not by knocking it out with a hammer and then polishing and painting it again, but by applying a torch to the dent from the inside in a particular way so that it sprang back into shape as though by itself, leaving the paintwork almost intact. In a garage a 'knack' like that can save a lot of expensive man-hours and materials, which finally results in a lower cost for the customer.

The mechanics, the bodywork mechanic and the proprietor all regularly go on courses, each of them for an average of ten days per year. The

proprietor also goes on courses in order to keep up to date with technical developments, so that he can continue to follow and keep an eye on the activities in the repair shop, but also so that he can put in some work himself, which he does regularly. Courses are taken at Volvo and Accinauto.

The courses at Accinauto and Volvo are free, but the employee still has to be paid. Due to the small scale of the business, a training course almost never leads to promotion. No cost-benefit analysis of the courses has ever been produced: the company is too small for that. Moreover Volvo makes the courses more or less compulsory, and they are necessary in order to be able to repair today's cars.

In a subsidiary way this company's training policy is thus defined by the supplier's training centres: Van De Peer follows the programmes at these centres. The courses which are taken by employees depend on the policy of the two suppliers.

The proprietor has been attending management courses from time to time for about five years.

5. Evaluation of course designs

Van De Peer tries to send his personnel on as many courses as possible, so as to keep them well qualified and allow them to become acquainted with new products. This is part of a strategy to maintain a good position with regard to Volvo, so that customers can always be given excellent quality (this is the company's strength) and so as to keep up with the market.

5.1 Evaluation of the staff sheets

Three sheets were filled in and sent back.

The bodywork mechanic has only taken the VDAB course, and he was recruited on this basis. The foreman has been in service the longest (8 years) and during that time he has taken quite a few courses: he refers to 8, all at Volvo, some very extensive (max. 20 days for an electronics course and a few one-day courses). In the long term, theory and practice turn out to be about equally important. He has not taken any courses at Accinauto. The third employee is a mechanic, and he has only been working at Van De Peer for a year. He has only taken one course, and that was at Volvo.

Apart from the foreman, the number of courses reported on the sheets was lower than expected. This probably has something to do with the workers' short periods in service. The bodywork mechanic will probably attend his first Accinauto course when the new spraying cabin is installed. If the direction and regularity of the foreman's training is projected into the future for the workers who have just been recruited, it can be expected that they will follow a similar pattern after a few years. It is clear from the sheets that the employer attaches major importance to training. The number of sheets was fairly limited, so there seems to be little point in carrying out a complete analysis.

Van De Peer fits into the normal practice concept (see below under 6).

There is still a need for training in customer relations: in recent years the group of customers has changed a great deal and become more heterogeneous. It has therefore become difficult for the mechanics to assess the customers and their attitude towards cars. Finally the customers come into the repair shop quite often to follow the work being done to the car, so there is frequently direct contact between the mechanic and the customer. A general course in electronics would also be welcome.

6. Conclusions

This case clearly reflects the structure of the car sector. Van De Peer, as a service point, is dependent on an agent, who in turn is dependent on the importer. This dependence is contractual in nature, but there is also a dependence in terms of gaining knowledge. The importer keeps in contact with the field in a specific way, through representatives or inspectors, and develops a range of courses on this basis. The only activity at company level is consumption.

Van De Peer is an example of a normal practice company. He does take a lot of courses, but only the ones which are offered to him – he does not take any initiative himself. On the other hand there are a few aspects of this case which make it interesting.

For a small company, the proprietor and workers at Van De Peer take a particularly large number of courses. The proprietor has a very good idea of his personnel's needs: a mechanic does not only need technical knowledge, but he must also have social skills, both for customer relations and for teamwork.

Van De Peer strives to achieve a very high level of quality in his work – he wants to offer a 100% service. Doubtless this concern is also a reason for taking courses frequently.

Van De Peer follows a number of healthy principles in his company management and personnel policy. This results in high quality work, carried out by a motivated body of employees who can be deployed in a flexible way.

Answers to questions

1. There is an ad hoc approach to designing training courses, both at company level and on the level of the importers who provide the courses. Courses are set up as a result of a

certain event, usually the introduction of a new product. Nevertheless there is a noticeable dynamic between the needs at the base and the programming at the top. Both importers keep in constant touch with the dealers and mechanics, one of them clearly in a more structured way than the other. However, even in this context they still wait for a specific event, namely for a need to arise.

2. No analysis of the demand for knowledge is carried out at any level.

3. There is no target group policy at any level.

4. The content of the courses is aimed towards the application of knowledge. The aim is always to increase knowledge so the trainee can continue to function well and keep up to date with technological developments.

5. The courses are paid for by those who provide them, in this case the importers. The only cost to the employer is staff wages during the course.

6. No cost-benefit analysis has been carried out. This is doubtless due to the structure of the sector. For owners it is more or less compulsory to take courses, and it is necessary in any case if they want to stay in the market. Importers have to provide information so they can guarantee a proper after-sales service. For the supplier of car paint and bodywork accessories, the provision of training courses is obviously a useful sales tool.

3. FORD

Size of company: II

Make: Ford (sub-contractor)

Category of motor vehicle: A

Type of company: F

1. Description of the case study

Carroserie Dendeux SA is located in Tubize, a small town in the Walloon region of Brabant, about 20 km from Brussels. The company employs two repair staff (type 2) and carries out bodywork repairs for cars and small commercial vehicles. Continuing vocational training is undertaken externally within the framework of the courses offered by AKZO.

2. Brief history of the company

The company was set up by Mr. D. who left in 1980 to enter the teaching profession.

Since 1980 the company has been run by his wife, Mrs. H.

The couple divorced in 1985 and Mrs. H. took over the bodywork company which became a public limited company in 1990.

Mrs. H. is the only female managing director of a bodywork repair company in Belgium.

3. Current situation

The company's capital is Bfr 1,250,000 (ECU 31,250) with a turnover of Bfr 20,000 (ECU 50,000) which is five times the figure for 1985. The company repairs 800 vehicles per year and this figure is constantly rising.

If the company continues to prosper, as expected by Mrs. H., it will need to relocate to larger premises.

In the event of the anti-pollution rules which have been introduced in Flanders (Vlaren 11) being implemented nationwide, moving to an industrial estate would not present a problem for the company. Under these laws new bodywork repair companies will be required to set up their repair shops on industrial estates and existing bodywork companies, whose operating permits are approaching their expiry dates, will be granted a transition period.

It should be borne in mind that since the decentralization of Belgium, environmental matters are the responsibility of the regions. Each region (Walloon, Brussels and Flemish) have separate legislation which has undergone frequent modifications in recent years. These constant changes and the proliferation of decision-making bodies have meant that bodywork repair companies are seldom aware of their obligations concerning the environment. Many of them are also working without operating permits. There is little to suggest that common rules will be implemented, except possibly if required to comply with European regulations.

The bodywork repair industry realises that in a few years time it will have to cope with some major changes and expects substantial changes in the industry due to increased costs and restrictions, particularly in connection with water and air pollution caused by industrial and liquid waste.

The smaller bodywork repair companies, who make up the bulk of the industry, are likely to disappear in the very near future.

It is currently estimated that there are some 5,500 bodywork repair companies in Belgium, but the majority only operate as bodywork repair firms on an occasional basis (any mechanic is, by law, allowed to call himself a bodywork repairer).

The introduction of water-based paints on to the market, which is anticipated to happen around the year 2000, is an example of the changes likely to affect the industry. In this case bodywork repair companies will need to make substantial investments both in terms of finance (booths, application and drying facilities, etc.) and training. However, due to the uncertainty that exists no steps have been taken at present.

Company D has worked as a sub-contractor for the town's Ford dealership for the past 15 years. It is not concerned about competition from bodywork repair firms linked to particular makes of car since none of the dealers or agents in the area sells a sufficient number of cars to warrant setting up their own bodywork repair shop. Mrs. H. sees the future of the company in sub-contracting and also undertakes mechanical work on a sub-contract basis.

Bodywork repair company D is linked to a large number of insurance companies. Following agreements concluded between insurance companies and various bodywork repair companies, in the event of a claim the insurance company recommends to the owner of the damaged vehicle that he have the repairs carried out by a bodywork repair company on a list of accredited companies.

In this case the owner does not have to pay for the repair work which is invoiced directly to the insurance company and frequently – as is the case with company D – a replacement vehicle is offered whilst the repair work is being carried out.

From the insurance company's point of view, this has the advantage of guaranteed professional competence at a reasonable price (clear tariffs, original parts, repairs carried out promptly).

Company D, in common with 740 other bodywork repair companies and related businesses in Belgium, has adopted the new computerized Audatex-Informex method of calculating estimates which is used by the insurance companies.

Audatex (Auto Data Expertise) is a system which allows the extent of the damage to be assessed according to standard criteria.

A central computer, at Minden in Germany, stores data on some 25 makes of car, 220 models and 2,100 versions in 11,000 specifications. For each model this information includes all the types, numbers and prices of components and all the possible repair times for dismantling, assembling and painting.

These millions of data items are supplied by the manufacturers and/or importers and are updated daily by Audatex.

The following parties are involved with the system: insurers, assessors, consumer associations, the manufacturing and repair industry and importers' associations.

For each vehicle model Audatex has a specific form (the Audatex Expertise form). All the relevant parts of the damaged vehicle are listed on this form and any additional information is transmitted on additional pre-printed documents.

For the purposes of ascertaining the extent of the damage, the relevant parts are listed together with the necessary steps to undertake the repairs. By means of this document the information is processed by the central computer which produces a detailed assessment of the damage.

Following the adoption of this system, Mrs. H. and a female member of staff attended a training course, organized in 1991, by the Belgian Federation of Bodywork Repair Companies (FEBEL-CAR).

4. Staff

4.1 Number of employees

When the company was first set up, the owner worked with 2 apprentices sponsored by the Ministry for Small Businesses. In 1980 the company employed 2 full-time repairers, 2 apprentices sponsored by the Ministry for Small Businesses and 1 part-time worker (a few hours a week according to requirements).

By 1992, there were 6 full-time repairers, 2 apprentices sponsored by the Ministry for Small Businesses, 1 part-time worker, 1 full-time member of staff, 1 part-time employee and a manager.

Blue collar workers:
2 full-time bodywork mechanics,
2 full-time paintshop workers, including Mrs. H.'s son who is also the repair shop manager;
2 work preparation operatives;
1 part-time worker who puts the finishing touches to cars for a few hours each week according to requirements;
2 apprentices sponsored by the Ministry for Small Businesses.

White collar workers:
Mrs. H.'s daughter, who is employed full-time
1 part-time employee

4.2 Initial qualifications and recruitment criteria

Apart from Mrs. H.'s son, who is a qualified A2 bodywork repairer and has attended a 1 year course in advanced painting, all the other blue-collar workers have been recruited via the apprenticeship scheme sponsored by the Ministry for Small Businesses.

After a 3-year apprenticeship, the best apprentices are taken on as blue-collar workers. The recruitment criteria are ability, motivation, application and, above all, a desire to continue improving their skills.

Mrs. H. does not plan to take on any new workers unless the company moves to large premises since the company is currently operating at maximum capacity.

The apprenticeship contract sponsored by the Ministry for Small Businesses is primarily aimed at young people who do not wish to continue in full-time education after the age of 16.

The training comprises a 3-year day release scheme, organized by the continuing training institute of the Ministry for Small Businesses.

During the first year the apprentice has 28 hours per week of on-the-job training at the company increasing to 32 hours per week during the last two years.

General and technical training is carried out at a continuing training centre for a total of 360 hours per year during the first year and 250 hours per year during the following years.

The apprentice is classed as a student and draws an apprenticeship allowance, paid by the company, of Bfr 4,600 per month during the first year rising to Bfr 8,940 per month during the third year.

In order to enter an apprenticeship, the student must either be 15 years old and have completed (i.e. without necessarily obtaining a certificate) the first 2 years of secondary education or else be 16 years old and have obtained an elementary

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certificate issued at the end of the 6th year of primary education.

Mrs. H.'s son is currently in charge of the apprentices as well as the trainees who come from the local technical and vocational training colleges.

Company D is having some difficulty in recruiting "suitable" apprentices, i.e. who are interested in the job and keen to undertake training, at present.

The managing director and her son share the opinion of a large number of employers that basic education is becoming increasingly inadequate with regard to practical training aspects and would like to see less general courses (current affairs, French, etc.) which reduce the number of hours available for practical training during the first years of secondary education.

They are also critical of the fact that too many schools offer the mechanics and bodywork option and would prefer to see fewer schools which are properly equipped. In fact, in the Belgian education system, it is by no means rare for teachers to be giving instruction in totally obsolete techniques due to the inadequate continuing training of teaching staff and out-dated equipment.

In addition, employment in the bodywork repair sector, or in fact the repair sector in general, has little attraction for young people who, if they choose the motor vehicle industry, would prefer to work in car manufacturing where the pay levels are higher.

4.3 Employment contracts and working conditions

All the staff have permanent employment contracts and staff turnover is minimal (no resignations since Mrs. H. took over the company). The staff age range is from 25 to 30.

Recruitment is local. Two of the workforce are Italian and the remainder are Belgian. They work a 39 hour week, 7 hours on Monday and 8 hours per day during the rest of the week. There are 3 weeks holiday in the summer and 1 week in winter.

The company closes for 1 week during August and 1 week between Christmas and New Year.

There is no overtime and wages are in line with the bodywork repair sector:

2 panel beaters	Bfr 359.25 gross per hour
Paintshop worker	Bfr 318.29 gross per hour
Repair shop manager (Mrs. H.'s son)	Bfr 425.39 gross per hour
1st preparation operative	Bfr 309.47 gross per hour
2nd preparation operative	Bfr 256.02 gross per hour
Finishing operative	Bfr 292.90 gross per hour

There are no social benefits.

4.4 Trade union

As the company employs less than 50 people there is no trade union representation.

5. Continuing training policy

The company has been affiliated to the AKZO group for the past 15 years. In addition to supplying information the group offers vocational training courses to its members.

5.1 The AKZO Group

AKZO is the supplier of Sikken motor vehicle industry paints and belongs to a multi-national chemical sector company employing some 68,000 people. Its parent company is located in the Netherlands.

Following complaints, 20 years ago, from bodywork repair companies about the quality of paintwork AKZO conducted a survey and concluded that the problems were frequently caused by poor preparation techniques.

They, therefore, decided to organize continuing training courses for bodywork repair companies and, 15 years ago, the training body was set up.

5.1.1 Club Akoad Selected

AKZO made a study of the Belgian bodywork repair sector and issued an invitation to a select group of independent bodywork repair companies to become members of its club.

The selection was deliberately elitist since AKZO believes that changes in this sector enable only the fittest to survive.

Accordingly, Mrs. H. was contacted 15 years ago and willingly agreed to become a member.

Club Akoad Selected currently has 90 members in Belgium and any potential members are subject to a thorough investigation before acceptance.

An annual subscription of Bfr 20,000 (ECU 500) is payable (likely to be increased next year).

All the club members are entitled to two free training courses in the Netherlands.

Each training course lasts for 2–3 days and covers technical subjects (e.g. colour shading/colour matching) and management. In the Netherlands there are 2 full-time instructors and in Belgium 2 full and 1 part-time instructors monitor the projects.

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Regional information evenings are organized several times a year.

An annual training schedule is drawn up and each member is sent an invitation to these training programmes.

They are frequently reminded, by telephone, of the dates and importance of the training courses for which they have registered.

With regard to practical courses, the number of participants is limited to ±5 people and to 10 people for theoretical courses.

The courses are organized in modules and include a great deal of practical work. At the end of a course the participants are set a form of "homework" and are visited at a later stage by an AKZO representative who "checks" to see whether the homework has been completed, whether the training has brought positive results to the repair shop and provides follow-up and encouragement.

5.1.2 The consultancy service

Approximately 3 years ago, AKZO set up a training service which is accessible to all bodywork repair companies who are not club members.

These courses are fee paying (± Bfr 15,000 for a 2 day course) and are held at the AKZO technical centre in Vilvorde on the outskirts of Brussels.

It was not possible to obtain details of training budgets and expenditure because of the number of departments involved.

5.1.3 Technical training courses

5.1.3.1 Colour matching/shading training courses

Course A

Duration:	3 days
Basic theory:	1.5 days
Practical training:	1.5 days

Course B

After a few months the participants from course A progress to course B (3 days) which is more practically oriented.

Course C

This course covers new developments in paints and pigments.

Course D

Duration: ½ day

The purpose of this course is to develop good painting practice, to make the paintshop worker realise that it is not enough to just read the manufacturer's instructions to obtain an excellent result because colour varies from one vehicle to another.
This recently introduced course is free of charge and is designed to motivate workers to attend other training courses.

5.1.3.2 Other courses directly related to painting

These 1 day courses are free of charge.

There are approximately 12 courses concerning application techniques for all existing paint systems as well as courses for specific types of painting, e.g. for lorries.

These courses are intended for independent bodywork repair companies, dealers, agents and independent distributors (paint products are sold through a network of independent distributors).

The principle underlying the training is always the same, i.e. one-third of the course is theoretical and two-thirds is spent on practical instruction.

At the end of each course participants receive copies of technical notes and reports.

Organization of courses

The distributors' sales representatives collect applications from bodywork repair companies and these are sent in by the distributor.

The director of the technical centre draws up a training programme in relation to the applications received.

5.1.4 Management training courses

A number of management training courses are offered: banking techniques, accountancy, management of a bodywork repair company, organization of work in the repair shop, etc.

As well as organizing training AKZO will, on request, undertake studies on the efficient running of a bodywork repair shop (starting a company, optimal organization of a repair shop, company plans, increasing productivity, etc.).

5.1.5 Projects

As stated previously, the industry is waiting to see what changes occur in the market before acting because there are too many unknown factors, particularly with regard to environmental policy and the future "ecological" paints.

5.2 Bodywork repair company D

Company D attends all the training courses it considers to be relevant.

5.1

These courses are attended principally by the owner, as far as company management courses are concerned, and by her son, the repair shop manager, for training courses relating to painting.

Following training the son acts as an instructor for the other workers. Other employees are sent on training courses as required.

The company does not operate a fully-fledged training strategy but tends to undertake training on an ad hoc basis according to need and the courses on offer.

In this respect the company studied can be regarded as highly representative in terms of training provision in the motor vehicle sector and possibly throughout industry as a whole in Belgium where there is no real tradition of training.

Until the inter-occupational agreement of 1991–1992, a statutory training requirement did not exist in Belgium.

Continuing vocational training depended on the initiative of the employer or on the employee's own initiative, mainly via paid training leave.

There is a widely held view that training is the answer to unemployment although hardly any figures on companies' vocational training exist since there is no formal requirement for employers to systematically record their training activities.

Similarly, even when training takes place it is very difficult to ascertain figures which allow the training effort to be assessed.

According to a survey carried out by Claire De Brier[3] almost half the companies which organize training do not finance it from a specific training budget.

In some cases the costs of training are entered under the overheads of the various departments and in other cases under the operating expenses of the personnel department.

Only 1 out of 2 training officers was able to provide an estimate of the amount spent on training over a one-year period. Even then, the figures provided cannot be used for comparison purposes since the situation described varies from company to company.

For instance, some companies regard training expenses as comprising only the fees paid to an outside consultant, whilst others include the operating expenses of the training department, other companies include the salaries of the training department staff and sometimes the salaries of course participants.

Regarding paid training leave, this was first introduced in 1985 (replacing the law on paid day release courses [Loi sur les crédits d'heures]), these are vocational or general training courses attended by the employee either during working hours or in the evening.

Under the law on paid training leave, any full-time worker in the private sector who wishes may attend a general training course for a maximum of 160 hours, paid for in full by the state, or a vocational training course for a maximum of 240 hours, half of which is paid by the state and the other half by the employer.

The courses chosen do not necessarily have to be directly related to the work carried out in the company.

Although this type of training is widely used by employees, less than 10% of the students have applied for paid training leave as such, others attend evening courses without notifying their employer, which highlights the attitude to vocational training in Belgium.

The inter-occupational agreement of 1991–1992

This agreement follows on from the inter-occupational agreement of 1989–1990 which stipulated that 0.18% of the total payroll should be used to assist the integration of job seekers from risk groups, these measures were accompanied by a training programme.

The money is paid into an employment fund set up by the Ministry of Employment. In line with the recommendations issued by the social partners this fund is used to support training and employment schemes.

The contribution was waived in the case of industries and companies which, by means of new provisions in collective agreements or by extending provisions in collective agreements, had taken in 1989–1990 what the Ministry of Employment considered to be equivalent measures directed at risk groups.

However, the employers were not particularly interested in integrating risk groups (e.g. long-term unemployed, poorly-educated unemployed). A total of Bfr 1.5 billion (ECU 37.5 million) was paid into the employment fund, virtually none of which has been used.

[3] Claire de Brier: Les pratiques de formation dans les entreprises belges (Training practices in Belgian companies), ICHEC, 1990.

Under the 1991–1992 agreement, the percentage has been increased to 0.25% (Bfr 3 billion for Wallonia) and the definition of risk groups has been widened to include older workers, workers with few skills and those having to work with new technologies, which is more closely tailored to the companies' needs.

As a consequence, Bfr 120 million (ECU 28,714.4 million) has already been paid into the employment fund. The bulk of the funds collected has been retained within the industries or companies concerned and there are indications that the next inter-occupational agreement will follow the same approach.

0.10% of this figure must still be used for the most vulnerable category of workers. Positive action in favour of women is the second objective of the 0.25% scheme. The social partners play a more active role in the Employment Fund.

As regards the bodywork repair sector, this 0.25% will be used exclusively for the training of risk groups in the strict sense of the term, i.e. unemployed, young people on day release courses and immigrants).

In the motor vehicle sector the funds are administered by a vocational training foundation, the FPPA (Fondation pour la Formation Professionnelle dans le secteur de l'Automobile).

This foundation was set up jointly by the industry and the social partners in October 1989 to carry out an accurate assessment of the needs of the different sectors (studies in progress).

It provides vocational training for the unemployed in conjunction with FOREM – l'Office Communautaire et Régional de la Formation Professionnelle et de l'Emploi (Community and regional office for vocational training and employment) and, sometimes, through non-profit associations for the underqualified.

There is no vocational training budget in the sector for low-skilled workers despite the fact that all the signs indicate a reduction in the number of jobs held by unskilled or semi-skilled workers.

Company D, unlike many other SMEs, is keen to undertake training on a regular basis and does not consider vocational training to be a waste of time for the company but, on the contrary, a highly profitable investment. Despite this, no record is kept of training courses attended.

Mrs. H. pays an annual subscription of Bfr 20,000 (ECU 500) to AKZO, which provides access to all the Club Akoad Selected courses, some of which are free of charge. All the costs incurred are entered into the general overheads and Mrs. H. is not aware of the amount spent on training.

Similarly, no list of the training courses attended exists in the company although the courses found to be interesting are remembered. The sole source of information has thus been the collective memory of the workforce (cf. individual notes).

The repair shop manager instructs the apprentices sponsored by the Ministry of Small Businesses as well as the trainees and bodywork repair students from local technical and vocational colleges.

The company considers that AKZO provides sufficient training in paintwork techniques and is not seeking training elsewhere in this area.

However, the company does require training in bodywork but this is unavailable. At the present time the only training of this type is provided by the motor vehicle manufacturers to their dealers and agents and this is not accessible to independent firms.

Company D has, therefore, been forced to rely on technical booklets and Tips magazine, which is published by the Vocational Training Foundation for the Motor Vehicle Industry. This magazine reports on technical problems encountered by its members as well as solutions to these problems.

Company D, together with a large number of SMEs, would like to see the motor vehicle manufacturers organizing 1 day training courses which are accessible to independent companies whenever a new model is introduced.

6. Conclusion and evaluation

6.1 By the company

Against the criteria of the company's success, the company considers the training provided by AKZO to be excellent.

6.2 By the workforce

The workforce's evaluation is also a positive one. In particular, they mention the self-confidence the training has given them as a result of meeting up with other workers and the high standard of the facilities made available to them (quality of premises, meals, accommodation, etc.).

One preparatory worker was promoted to paint-shop worker following a training course but, in general, there is no relation between training courses attended and promotion.

The company considers it normal to want to adapt to new technology, standards, etc., and indeed this is one of the criteria taken into account at the time of recruitment.

Appendices

Personal data of employees in the repair and sales sector

Name: V. S.
Age: 31 years
Length of employment: 14 years
Education: Apprentice sponsored by the Ministry of Small Businesses
Training to become a manager
Position held: Bodywork technician

Name: A. L.
Age: 41 years
Length of employment: 22 years
Education: Occupational secondary
Position held: Finishing operative

Name: R. P.
Age: 29 years
Length of employment: 13 years
Education: Apprentice sponsored by the Ministry of Small Businesses
Position held: Bodywork technician

Name: D. P.
Age: 27 years
Length of employment: 5 years
Education: Apprentice sponsored by the Ministry of Small Businesses
Position held: Paintshop worker

Name. D. A.
Age: 30 years
Length of employment: 8 years
Education: A2 bodywork repairer + 1 year course in advanced painting
Position held: Repair shop manager and paintshop worker

Name: D. D.
Age: 25 years
Length of employment: 3 years
Education: Apprentice sponsored by the Ministry of Small Businesses
Position held: Preparation worker

Name: V. G.
Age: 18 years
Length of employment: 1 year
Education: Apprentice sponsored by the Ministry of Small Businesses
Position held:

Name: V. C.
Age: 18 years
Length of employment: 1 year
Education: Apprentice sponsored by the Ministry of Small Businesses
Position held:

Name: D. Pa.
Age: 25 years
Length of employment: 3 years
Education: General secondary education, conservatory of dramatic art,
2nd year car assessment
Position held: Administration

Name: B. B.
Age: 22 years
Length of employment: 1 year
Education: Technical secondary (commercial)
Position held: Employee

Name: Mrs. H.
Age: 49 years
Length of employment: 22 years
Education: Technical secondary (commercial)
Position held: Managing director

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Table 1 – Participation in continuing vocational training courses (1987–1992)

Name	Course content	Year of course (duration)	Methodology		Institute		Certificate (level attained)	Private study
			Practical workshop	Theoretical	In-company training	External course		
RP	Spray gun	3 days	75%	25%		Club Akoad Selected	Certificate	–
	Colouring	3 days	75%	25%		Idem	Certificate	–
DP	Colour preparation	4 days	75%	25%		AKZO	Certificate	–
DA	Technical management	3 days				AKZO		–
	Colour course A	3 days	50%	50%		AKZO	Certificate	
	Colour course B	3 days	75%	25%		AKZO	Certificate	
	Colour course C	1 days	50%	50%		AKZO	Certificate	
	Spray gun	1 day	75%	25%		AKZO	Certificate	
Mrs. H	Management	3 days	25%	75%		Club Akoad	Certificate	–
	Correspondence		50%	50%		Selected		
	Accountancy		50%	50%		AKZO		
	Management of the bodywork repair company		50%	50%		AKZO		
	Organization of work in the bodywork repair company		50%	50%		AKZO		
	Audatex system	1991 – 1 day				FEBELCAR		
D. Pa	Audatex system	1991 – 1 day				FEBELCAR		–

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Appendix – Case study no. 3

1. *The AKZO training programmes*

2. *Technical training* (item 5.1.3) is provided by instructors at the AKZO training centre and is open to all bodywork repair companies whether or not they are members of the Club Akoad Selected, i.e.:

   - independent bodywork repair companies
   - apprentices sponsored by the Ministry for Small Businesses
   - independent distributors of Sikkens products

   Management training (item 5.1.4) is provided by specialist trainers at the AKZO training centre and is mainly aimed at managers from bodywork repair shops.

3. *Number of days training undertaken by the company's workforce*

There is no answer to this question. As stated in the report there is no written record of the training courses attended and the employees refer only to those courses which they can remember.

The majority of courses are attended by the repair shop manager and the managing director.

As regards other employees:

- the 2 bodywork technicians have not attended any courses (the firm is unable to find a bodywork course),
- the finishing operative works a few hours per week and does not attend any courses,
- the 2 apprentices do not undertake training courses,

Thus, only 3 employees (1 painter and 2 preparation workers) qualify for training.

Since training is organized according to needs it is impossible to establish an average figure. In some years no training is undertaken, in others a course of 3–4 days duration may be followed.

4. *Evaluation by the researcher*

As far as the training courses are concerneds it is only possible to refer to the company itself, which is satisfied with the training provided by AKZO. Indeed, the company is well-known at AKZO for its eagerness to attend training courses.

It is a pity, however, that most of the training courses are rather "monopolized" by the company's management. However, the case study deals with a small family company which may explain the situation, particularly as there is no legal obligation in respect of training in Belgium.

4. MERCEDES

Size of company: IV

Make: Mercedes

Category of motor vehicle: A, B

Type of company: A

Foreword
This study tries to follow, as far as possible, the general structure laid down for the case studies.

However, this structure bears little relation to the actual continuing training schemes under review.

If the structure had been followed item by item, the text would not only have become "indigestible" but, above all, it would have given a distorted picture of the actual case, giving too much importance to certain minor aspects and skipping over major ones.

Therefore, a number of items were not included since they did not relate to the actual situation.

1. General description of the case study
The study concerns the continuing vocational training schemes organized by the Mercedes network.

Mercedes has a technical training centre at Zaventem as well as a management and sales training centre at Woluwe.

The subsidiaries, dealers and agents "duly accept that any member of their staff can follow the training and redeployment courses organized by Mercedes Benz, Belgium".

Training courses for new products are compulsory.

Company E, the subject of the case study follows, exclusively, training programmes organized by Mercedes as do all the other dealers in the Mercedes network.

2. General description of the company

2.1 General characteristics of the company
Company E, a public limited company, is a Mercedes dealership (type B) selling cars and vans. The company sells approximately 250 vehicles per year and repairs, on average, 30 vehicles daily. The company is located in the industrial area of Wavre, a small town approximately 20 km from Brussels.

The company comprises 25 employees (type 4), 16 repair mechanics, 1 salesman and the managing director.

2.2 History, strategy and development
Company E is a family-run company and has been a Mercedes dealer since 1952.

In 1960 the company only employed four people. The company gradually expanded and a few months ago moved to the industrial area of Wavre, where it now occupies an area of 3,800 sq.m., i.e. three times its former size.

The company is equipped with the latest machinery and offers excellent working conditions.

Since 1952 Mercedes has renewed the dealership annually and sets the annual targets to be reached (turnover, number of cars or parts to be sold, etc.).

With its 9 subsidiaries Mercedes controls 45% of the Belgian Mercedes market, the remaining 55% is divided between 56 dealers and 50 authorized agents.

Company E works with 3 agents covering its authorized territory. However, this does not prevent it from occasionally selling cars outside its "territory". In the past, if such a sale took place, the vendor had to pay a percentage of the sales price to the dealer whose interests had been "jeopardized".

As is the case for all dealers in the Mercedes network, company E sells Mercedes vehicles exclusively.

Company turnover is Bfr 400 million (ECU 10 million) and its capital (including reserves) totals Bfr 73,180,114 (ECU 1,829,502.8).

The company sells 250 vehicles per year and currently repairs 28 to 30 vehicles per day which it considers to be insufficient.

However, the economic crisis has apparently also affected Mercedes owners and business at present is, therefore, stagnant.

Before the company moved to its new site, a study was made into the possible establishment of a car body repair shop. Mercedes was very much in favour of this idea, but the investment cost was considered to be too high and the scheme was abandoned.

Company E sub-contracts work to 2 local bodywork repairers. The repair shop manager believes this to be the best solution since he considers bodywork and mechanical repairs to be two totally different jobs.

The extremely strict environmental regulations applied in the Walloon region, notably on waste disposal (oil, batteries, tyres, etc.) are a problem for the company's management. Until now waste

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was either thrown away or given to local farmers (tyres, wrecks, etc.)

If the company has to assume responsibility for disposal of waste products itself, the cost involved will inevitably be passed on to the customer.

The managing director is concerned that draconian legislation was introduced before proper solutions had been evolved. He believes it would be more logical if responsibility for waste products fell on the producers of polluting objects.

2.2.1 Impact of new technology

New technology has mainly had an impact on the level of training required for recruitment and has led to frequent redeployment for all the staff.

Previously the managing director could recruit non-qualified mechanics with adequate professional experience by advertising.

At present all the mechanics are either A2 or A3 and are preferably the top of their class.

2.2.2 Impact on repairs and sales

The introduction of electronic systems has had a dramatic effect on the sector. Since the school system does not "produce" electro-mechanics it is up to the company to train young mechanics.

Only the best school leavers are recruited now and training has become much easier.

Sales have also been profoundly affected. Customer contacts have become much more personalized and occur at a time convenient to the customer, i.e. no longer in the evenings, which used to be common practice.

2.3 Company structure

2.3.1 Organization chart

Table 1

2.3.2 Workforce

Repair shop: 13 mechanics
Warehouse: 2 warehousemen
Sales: 1 salesman
Reception: 3 staff

2.3.3 Work organization

Sales policy is based on the cordial reception of customers and impeccable after-sales service.

For example, a breakdown service is provided 24 hours a day, holidays included, by the various Mercedes repair shops on a rota system.

Company E provides this 24-hour service for one week per month.

A mechanic (who is also the caretaker) and a volunteer warehouseman ensure this service is provided.

The repair shop also ensures that maintenance jobs are carried out in the shortest possible time, e.g. one ramp is used exclusively for the rapid oil change service.

Since 1981, in addition to the managing director, one person is employed exclusively in the sales department.

Apart from visiting potential customers (approx. 6 per day), the salesman calls regularly on Mercedes owners. Personal contact is indeed one of the keystones of company policy.

The showroom displays approx. 30 cars although most of the buyers prefer a custom-made car (colour, accessories, etc.).

The salesman sometimes accompanies a potential customer to the showroom at Zaventem, which has 52 different models, or takes the potential buyer for a demonstration run in the car of his dreams.

Once the sale has been concluded, the salesman delivers the car to the customer and a final demonstration is given.

As far as the repair shop is concerned, the foreman allocates the day's work depending on the specific skills of each mechanic.

All the mechanics are multi-skilled but some are better than others at certain tasks which they are then assigned first.

Thus, even though there is no hierarchy among the mechanics, the company has:

- a specialist in electrics-electronics, who is currently training an assistant mechanic;
- a specialist in cylinder heads and injection systems, who is also training an assistant mechanic;
- a specialist in repairs carried out under guarantee;
- a specialist in vans, assisted by two mechanics.

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2.4 Staff

2.4.1 Total workforce

In 1992 the company employed 25 people, i.e. 16 blue-collar and 9 white-collar workers.

In 1987 the company employed 23 people, i.e. 17 blue-collar and 6 white-collar workers.

2.4.2 Workforce

There are 6 women employed in administration, reception and accounts.
3 women are aged between 30 and 40.
3 women are aged between 40 and 50.

There are 19 men employed as: mechanic (13 + the repair shop foreman), warehouseman (2 + warehouse foreman), reception (1) and salesman (1).

10 are under 25
4 are between 30 and 40,
4 are between 40 and 55
1 is over 55.

A large number of mechanics retired recently which explains the 10 young mechanics.

1 employee is of foreign nationality (Moroccan) and was engaged after a period of holiday employment. The other workers are Belgian and live in the area.

All the contracts are permanent full-time contracts.

2.4.3 Working conditions

The working week is 38 hours, from 8.00 to 12.00 and from 13.00 to 17.00 (except for Friday when the repair shop closes at 15.00).

The annual holidays consist of 20 working days + one supplementary day granted to workers with 10 years service.

Wages are in accordance with the sector wage scale, i.e.:
Bfr 358 gross/hour (ECU 8.95) for skilled workers – category 1 (experienced mechanics),
Bfr 342 gross/hour (ECU 8.55) for skilled workers – category 2 (mechanics with little work experience).

The young mechanics recruited direct from school are all paid the basic wage. Pay rises are subsequently granted depending on the know-how of the workers, their work rate, etc. Thus, each employee has individual and, to a certain extent, confidential wages.

The company's managers consider the wages of the young employees to be much too high in relation to the work they do and refer with regret to the days when they had more freedom in fixing wages according to the workers' abilities.

There are no social benefits apart from the supplementary holiday after 10 years service.

2.4.4 Workers' training needs

The company does not apply the "Small Businesses" training system (cf. sectoral study) since it believes that its workers should quickly be operational. All the workers[4] have at least A3 (vocational training).

The company mainly recruits young school-leavers for whom it provides on-the-job training.

Company E has no problems in recruiting good mechanics as the repair shop foreman is a member of the assessment panel at the local technical school and can, thus, select the best students, either A3 or A2 (technical training).

Contrary to common complaints about the low level of training in certain technical schools, the company is highly satisfied with the level of its young mechanics. It does have some problems, however, in finding experienced electricians.

There are no real internal promotion opportunities; there is only one repair shop foreman per company.

A young mechanic starting in the repair shop is first given minor tasks under the supervision of an experienced mechanic.

After 2 weeks he gradually works unsupervised and after 2–3 years he becomes a "semi-skilled" worker.

According to their interests, the mechanics can subsequently specialize in one particular field, although this does not constitute an actual promotion.

2.4.5 State of the market

Some 12,000 passenger cars are sold in Belgium each year.

Company E ranks among the medium-sized dealers. The largest dealership sells some 1,000 cars annually, the smallest 60. Three-quarters of the companies belonging to the Mercedes network are located in the Flemish region.

3. Continuing vocational training centres

Company E participates exclusively in training schemes organized by Mercedes, considering that

[4] Only family members (sons, nephews) followed educational options other than that of mechanic.

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these schemes meet their training needs more than adequately.

Prior to 1988 there were 2 importers for Mercedes: IMA for passenger cars and Matinotto for commercial vehicles.

In 1980 Benz took over all imports, which led to the merger of the training centres and the creation of one training centre at Zaventem (Brussels) for technical training and one centre at Woluwe (Brussels) for sales and management training.

There is also a centre at Charleroi (Wallonia) and one at Anderlecht (Brussels) for bodywork. These centres have a mainly practical orientation.

Frequently the same people attend the training courses (there are approx. 30 authorized Mercedes bodywork repair shops).

At present training courses are less frequent since the workers are well trained.

There are also other small training centres, e.g. training in computing is provided by the Mercedes computer department; the central warehouse undertakes training in certain fields since it has all the Mercedes parts and the personnel department provides management training which does not involve customer contact.

3.1 The centre for technical training

This centre is part of the after-sales/logistics department.

3.2 The centre for sales and management training

4. Company training policy

4.1 Training schemes and concepts

Company E participates exclusively in training courses organized by Mercedes, accordingly the company has no specific training strategy.

The managing director attends management training courses for approx. 5 days per year as well as sales training for new products. He also participates in comparative tests.

Mr. S. is the Chairman of the Dealers Association for the French-speaking part of the country. This association is regularly consulted by Mercedes (5–6 times per year), e.g. when a new advertising campaign is launched.

4.2 Analysis of prerequisites

The company has complete freedom in respect of its personnel and wages policy.

However, it is customary to inform Mercedes whenever a new salesman is recruited and he is then invited to the training centre for an assessment test. This test involves an interview, psychotechnical tests, exercises in salesmanship and communication.

After signing a contract and before his first working day, the new salesman receives a few days basic training.

An educational certificate is not required. However, although some salesmen only complete 3 years of secondary or technical studies the majority complete the full 6 years of secondary education and many of them have an engineering certificate.

Less than 5% of the sales force are women.

The minimum level required for the mechanics is A3 (vocational education) with a marked preference for A2 level (technical education).

The training centre establishes the know-how of the new mechanics and aims to establish as soon as possible the technical operations a repair shop in the network can carry out, taking into account the qualification level of its workforce.

4.3 Target group

4.3.1 Technical training

The training schemes are aimed at staff within the Mercedes network.

However, many requests are received from companies who do not belong to the network but own commercial vehicles and carry out repairs themselves. Even though these companies are not members of the network they are allowed to participate in training courses since they are important customers, some of them with more than 200 Mercedes vehicles.

The centre is currently trying to rationalize the training courses offered and has asked each Mercedes repair shop to compile a list of their workers, detailing each mechanic's main and

secondary activities, in order to be able to identify participants more efficiently.

This project has not yet been completed as the repair shops are often reluctant to provide the information and the data is difficult to process.

As a result, at present it is still the repair shops who select the training course participants but in accordance with a compulsory rota and with a quota of participants per training course.

The company is no longer free to choose the period when a course takes place which sometimes causes organization problems.

It is mainly the mechanics who attend courses but Mercedes also organizes 1 or 2 days training for repair shop foremen.

Training courses concerning new innovations are compulsory.

Mechanics, on average, attend 4 to 5 training courses per year.

4.3.2 Sales and management training

In addition to the basic training given to all new sales staff, a training course for inexperienced salesmen is organized as soon as 6 to 8 people speaking the same language apply for this type of course.

There is also a training course in sales and communication for experienced salesmen (i.e. after 5 years service). In fact, as soon as there is a drop in sales in a dealership which is above average the training centre proposes a training course to the manager of the company concerned (communication, management, etc.).

Since these courses are no longer free of charge they are not compulsory. In fact Mercedes expects companies in the network to bear 20% of the actual training costs. This is the only type of training which is not free. Training courses for products and innovations are free and compulsory.

4.4 Continuing training policy

4.4.1 Technical training

4.4.1.1 Training schemes

The Mercedes training centre decides annually on the training courses to be held (for further details see Appendix 2).

If a certain number of specific applications from dealerships are received a training course can be organized.

There are two types of training: training in respect of new products (compulsory) and basic training taken by the dealers and agents according to their needs.

4.4.1.2 The trainers

Mercedes is planning to employ two new trainers, one for passenger cars and one for commercial vehicles.

In principle the company would like to recruit trainers with an A1 certificate (3-year post-secondary education), particularly in view of the development of electronic systems, but wage conditions together with the lack of promotional opportunities make this impossible.

A1 trainers usually do not stay at the centre for long. The present trainers earn approx. Bfr 80,000 gross/month (ECU 20,000) and have 25 years experience.

All the present trainers are former Mercedes network mechanics.

The recruitment of trainers is obviously problematic since, in addition to the required technical qualifications, they also need to be completely bilingual and able to run courses in French as well as Dutch.

The Mercedes network is more important in Flanders than in Wallonia and the Flemish dealers make more applications for training than their Walloon counterparts.

It is not possible at present to have both a French-speaking and a Dutch-speaking trainer.

Apart from the two national languages, trainers also have to understand German since all the documents issued by the training centre in Stuttgart ("the factory") are written in German. These documents form the basis of the different courses.

4.4.1.3 Training the trainers

Every year the Belgian trainers, like all Mercedes trainers, spend two periods of one week at the factory.

The factory develops training programmes, always written in German, and it is up to the trainers from each country to adapt the programme to their "students".

There are no clear pedagogical guidelines. All the trainers follow their own systems, some making slides to make the subject matter easier to understand etc.

The trainers have attended some seminars on pedagogical techniques.

A German trainer comes to Belgium for a fortnight whenever Mercedes launches a new product.

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In the first week he prepares the new courses together with the trainers and during the second week two pilot courses are given to the staff of the after-sales department, the technical foremen, the technical inspectors and staff from the guarantee department.

On receipt of an application from the training centre, the factory sends a guest trainer and the centre determines the theme of the training. At present the number of participants is limited (e.g. 12 participants for the "bus" training).

4.4.1.4 Scope of the training

On average a trainer provides 84 hours of training per year.

In fact the centre provides as many training courses as it can handle.

In 1991 there were 208 training courses involving 1,884 workers.

4.4.1.5 Development of training strategy since 1987

There has been no actual development, rather an adjustment to new techniques.

4.4.2 Sales and management training

4.4.2.1 Training programme

A training programme is planned annually but a great deal of flexibility exists in order to meet market changes or the introduction of new products.

The centre works in close collaboration with the marketing department.

- Basic training

This training lasts on average 3 days, sometimes more, depending on the individual salesman.

The course consists of various modules, notably: the product, the market, the Mercedes organization.

There is little turnover among the Mercedes sales force and as a result this basic training is sometimes given to just one salesman.

Given the high cost involved, the centre introduced an interactive computer programme for the products 5 years ago.

Georges (the computer), assisted by a video giving a visual presentation of the different products, familiarizes the future salesman with a series of catalogues and teaches him how to trace information rapidly in the various documents.

The programme is, of course, continuously updated and can be modified if the trainers find that participants have difficulty in mastering certain items of the programme.

This module is run at the centre since Mercedes likes to know its sales staff personally and to acquaint them as quickly as possible with the staff of the different departments they will be working with.

This "product" training is also given to staff from the various Mercedes departments.

To date some 300 people have taken the course.

The market is explained by a trainer.

The organization describes the history of the company, the different departments, the ancillary products (e.g. different finance schemes) as well as the different services provided by the importer and to which the salesman can have recourse.

At the end of the course the salesman receives all the documents used during the course as well as a syllabus for personal study.

- Training for inexperienced salesmen (2–3 days)
- Sales and communication training for experience salesmen (2–3 days)
- New product training

The content of these courses reflects the most recent developments at Mercedes. The courses are organized as soon as a new product is announced.

Seminars are also organized involving competitor comparison. Some 160 people, i.e. all the salesmen and sales managers, try out, under identical circumstances, other makes of cars (vehicles kindly lent by competitors). After each test an assessment is made.

- Quality and customer service training

This course is intended for all those who come into direct contact with the customer (receptionists, cashiers, repair shop foremen, etc.).

- Management training

These courses are intended for company managers and are often run by external consultants. They concern specific themes and last 1 or 2 days.

Management training not involving customer contact is provided by the personnel department.

4.4.2.2 The trainers

The director of the centre coordinates all the courses and provides training in communications,

customer service and certain types of management.

Product training is given by two trainers.

Training for passenger cars and training for commercial vehicles are completely separate since the customer approach is entirely different.

4.4.2.3 Training of trainers

The qualification level of the trainers is higher than that of the technical trainers since the courses are developed at the centre and are continuously updated (one single programme may be used 5 times at most).

Qualifications of the trainers:
- engineer – post-university pedagogical training
- economist
- German language specialist – post-university marketing training

4.4.2.4 Scope of training in 1992

Basic training: 30 days
Training of inexperienced salesmen: 10 days
Training of experienced salesmen: 10 days
Product training: 60 days
Customer service/quality training: 50 days
Management training: 8 days

4.4.2.5 Development of training strategy since 1987

There has been no actual development but rather an adjustment to new products and market changes.

4.4.3 Impact of training on employees' careers

Since all employees have to undertake training there is no real impact on their occupational careers.

If, as a result of training, an employee's know-how increases, the manager can award a pay rise.

4.4.4 Social partners

Since trades unions are not represented in small and medium-sized companies and in addition there are no legal obligations in respect of training in Belgium (cf. sectoral study) the social partners do not play a role.

4.5 Cost of the training

All technical training courses are provided free, during working hours.

The only cost company E has to bear is the hours lost in production. These hours are not accounted for, but the company appears to be under the impression that training is expensive, although it is fully aware of the need for vocational training.

As far as sales training is concerned, only training for experienced sales staff is invoiced, at 20% of its actual cost, but as yet the company has not had to resort to this form of training.

4.6 Evaluation of the costs

4.6.1 The centre for technical training

The budget earmarked for training cannot be estimated since it is divided between different items.

The centre's staff budget includes:

Bfr 600,000/year (ECU 15,000)
for accommodation expenses (meals, coffee),
Bfr 150,000/year (ECU 3,750)
for teaching material,
Bfr 300,000/year (ECU 7,500)
for specific Mercedes equipment,
Bfr 150,000/year (ECU 3,750)
for basic equipment.

In addition to the annual budget other minor expenses are incurred, e.g. small articles of furniture.

4.6.2 The centre for sales and management training

The budget is determined on an annual basis.

In 1993 it will, for the first time, be reduced (as a consequence of the economic climate) but this will only involve logistic expenses (meals, etc.).

It was not possible to obtain detailed information about the budget but it is somewhere between Bfr 5 and 10 million (ECU 125,000 to 250,000).

This budget includes:
- external consultants,
- meals: 80% of the courses are held at the centre, 20% are held at a hotel,
- teaching material,
- translation fees for documents from Germany.

The factory used to provide documentation, teaching material, the services of a German consultant etc., free of charge.

At present, each country contributes towards expenses, co-financing films, etc.

5. Evaluation of the training policy

- By the training centre

As far as technical training is concerned, there is no real evaluation since the feedback is not really measurable.

Often too much time elapses between training and the opportunity to put the new know-how to

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practical use. This sometimes entails a certain loss of knowledge.

In this event the company contacts the trainers at the centre to ask for information, which it can do whenever it fails to solve a problem.

At the end of each year companies in the network receive an evaluation of their work in various fields, including training (participation, quality of participants, etc.).

- By company E

The staff frequently attend training courses and the company considers the training provided to be adequate.

The company does not draw up a list of courses attended and it is consequently the collective memory of the employees that is the sole source of information.

However, since the training courses are exclusively of a technical nature, few employees have been able to indicate the content of the courses taken, even those taken in 1992. All the employees had, somewhere, a certificate of attendance which they had received at the end of training... but where...?

At the end of each course participants have to complete a questionnaire concerning any problems encountered.

If the same type of problem occurs several times, Mercedes organizes a training course on that topic.

In general the employees do not consider that it is possible to predict the type of training required. They think it is preferable to work in relation to the jobs encountered, calling a trainer at the centre whenever problems arise. In most cases this proves to be an effective way of working.

Some workers would like the centre to organize more intensive training sessions, e.g. lasting one week where subjects can be covered in greater detail.

When employees return from a training course they discuss it in the repair shop and circulate the technical information they receive.

5.1 Technical centre training projects

In addition to the standard courses, which are regularly reviewed to cover new technical developments (cf. Appendix 2), the centre has plans to train "diagnostic mechanics" (who already exist in Switzerland) in 1993 who will become assistants to the repair shop foreman.

This new function has become necessary due to the complexity of the electronic equipment integrated in new cars.

The centre has new testers (diagnostic equipment) which will be delivered to the network following training.

This training will cover the basics of each electronic system to enable a diagnosis to be made.

4 to 5 days training are planned for each system.

The training will be staggered over several years since 106 participants are expected, i.e. 1 per dealership.

6. Conclusion

In general, staff and management are satisfied with the training offered by Mercedes and there is consequently no need to develop hypotheses on the ideal types of training.

Appendix 1

Name: R. L.
Age: 51
Length of service: 36 years
Initial training: 2 years technical studies
Position held: Repair shop foreman
Training: 6–8 courses per year, goes to Germany for 1 week where he receives update information and visits factories
All the courses concern cars, new technology ... but he is unable to give further details.
Courses comprise 90% theory and 10% practical (the trainer demonstrating how to use the equipment).
Duration: In general, 2 × 1 day

Name: Guy
Age: 36
Length of service: 14 years
Initial training: A2, mechanics option
Position held: Mechanic-electrician
Training: Average of 6–7 courses per year which he evaluates as interesting.
Duration: The most recent one (petrol engine M11 and M104 with HFM injection system)
2 × 1 day.

Name: Bruno
Age: 26
Length of service: 1 year
Initial training: A3 (electro-mechanics) + specialization
Position held: Mechanic-electrician
Training: 1992 2 × 1 day general training (different types of model and how to distinguish them)

Name: Didier D.
Age: 22
Length of service: 4 months
Initial training: Motor vehicle mechanic A3, 7th specialization year
Position held: Mechanic
Training: No training at present but he will participate in 1993.

Name: Pierre S.
Age: 25
Length of service: 4 years
Initial training: Higher secondary education + 2 years marketing (not completed)
Position held: Mechanic
Training: 5–6 × 4 years average approx.
2 × year e.g. basic principles (petrol/diesel engine mechanics)
1 × 1 day.
100% theory. He considers theses courses are interesting for newcomers.

Name: P. C.
Age: 43
Length of service: 26 years
Initial training: A4 mechanics
Position held: Mechanic
Training: 3–4 × year – 50% theory
Training taken when new models launched, e.g. electronics, injection, MB100 (van), commercial vehicles, carburettor.
Duration: 2 × 1 day

Name: Claude D.
Age: 30
Length of service: 7 years
Initial training: Lower and higher secondary + evening classes (filing, accounting, mechanics)
Position held: Receptionist
Training: 3–4 × year, often 2 × 1 day
Examples of courses taken: accounting, technical course (cars)

Name: Biron
Age: 38
Length of service: 18 years
Initial training: Technical secondary (mechanics) + 2 years specialization
Position held: Warehouse foreman
Training: Examples of courses taken:
- customer reception
- sales techniques
- microfiche
- computer science (regularly for 4 years)

After following a training course he acted as instructor for the 2 young warehousemen.
The latter are due to attend training at the centre within a year.

Name: A. C.
Age: 35
Length of service: 17 years
Initial training: Lower secondary + typewriting
Position held: Receptionist
Training: 15 × 1 day informatics when Mercedes introduced the Nixdorf system in 1987/1988

Name: JL. V.
Age: 38
Length of service: 12 years
Initial training: 3 years general secondary
Position held: Salesman (prior to working for company E he worked as a salesman in companies selling competitors' makes.)
Training: On average 10 courses/year and 1 residential seminar (2–3 days) each year.
He also goes to Germany to attend conferences, visit factories.
Example of training course taken: how to contact customers by telephone.

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Appendix 2

Table 1. – Annual training programme for passenger cars

Passenger cars			Survey
Training course no.	Subject	Place	Duration (days)
1000	Maintenance	Zaventem	3
1001	Modifications and new products		1–2
1002	All-terrain vehicles		2
1071	Diesel engines – 4/5/6 cyl. (turbo)		1
1073	Petrol engines – injection/ignition 4/6 cyl. – 6/8 cyl. multi-valve		1–2
1260	Mechanical gearbox (4/5 gears)		1
1270	Automatic gearbox (4/5 gears)		1
1280	Automatic blocking differential (ASD)		
	Automatic 4-wheel drive (4-MATIC)		2
1320	Level corrector		
	Hydropneumatic suspension (HPF)		
	Adaptive damping system (ADS)		2
1400	Position of rear and front axles		1
1420	Anti-lock braking system (ABS)		
	Anti-skid control (ASR)		2
1540	Options and systems		1–2
1600	Bodywork repairs	MB Bel Charleroi	4
1810	Bodywork equipment	Zaventem	2
1820	Basic principles of electricity		2
1980	Diagnosis of paintwork		1
1981	Paintwork repair	MB Bel Charleroi	4

Table 2

Passenger cars	Training no. 1280
Subject	Automatic blocking differential (ASD) Automatic 4-wheel drive (4-MATIC)
Target group	Technical staff: mechanic-electrician
Objective	Understand composition and function Undertake maintenance, inspection, adjustment and repair work Correct anomalies
Description	Composition and functioning – of the automatic blocking differential (ASD) – of the automatic 4-wheel drive (4-MATIC) Maintenance, inspection, adjustment and repair work Guidelines for measuring electric variables (tension, amperage, resistance) by means of a multimeter Testing of knowledge acquired
Duration	2 days

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Table 3 – Annual training programme for commercial vehicles

Commercial vehicles			Survey
Training course no.	Subject	Place	Duration (days)
3000	Maintenance	Zaventem	2
3001	Modifications and new products		1–2
3070	Diesel engines – 300 series		2
	Diesel engines – 400 series		2
3260	Mechanical gearbox		2
	MB G 125/155/180		
	Automatic gearboxes		2
3320	Pneumatic suspension		2
3420	Pneumatic brakes level 1		2
3421	Pneumatic brakes level 2		1
3540	Systems		
	EPS		1
	ABS/ASR		2
	Automatic heating TAKTMATIC		1
	Speed limiter		1
	Centralized lubrication		1
3820	Reinforced engine brake		1
	Basic principles of electricity		2

Table 4

Commercial vehicles	Training no. 3320
Subject	Pneumatic suspension
Target group	Technical staff: mechanic
Objective	Carry out all inspection, adjustment and repair works, make diagnosis
Description	Composition and function of the pneumatic suspension system of the valves Reading and interpretation of the automatic suspension diagrams Adjustment on the vehicle rear axle vis-a-vis the chassis level spring suspension with retractable axle ALB adjustment diagnosis of breakdowns – correction of anomalies modifications and new products testing of knowledge acquired
Duration	2 days

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Appendix 3

1. *The training programme*
   - Company E participates exclusively in training courses organized by Mercedes, considering that they adequately meet its training needs.

   Mercedes draws up annual training programmes which are subject to revision during the year. They cover new technologies, new products and market changes.

2. *Analysis of qualifications*
   - Although companies in the Mercedes network have complete freedom as far as recruitment is concerned, Mercedes assesses new salesmen and tests the skills of new mechanics.

   Mercedes' objective, in the near future is to determine the technical operations a repair shop can effect taking into consideration the qualification levels of its employees.

3. *Specific target group*

   There is no specific target group.

4. *Course content*

   There are 2 types of course: the technical courses (compulsory) for new products and the basic courses which are not compulsory.
   The sales courses concern products, communications, customer service, the different departments and services provided by the importer.

5. *Training costs*

   All Mercedes training courses are free, except for the training intended to improve the performance of salesmen with at least 5 years service, in which case the company bears approx. 20% of the actual cost of the training. Company E has never had to apply for the latter type of training.

6. *Costs and benefits of training*

   There is no information on this subject.

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PART 3:

Conclusions

Environmental requirements already exercise a major impact on this sector (see above). In future, the importance of environmental issues will undoubtedly become even greater. Increased pressure to recycle cars will push the car manufacturers to rethink car construction. The number of car parts to be assembled will presumably fall.

The possible revision of EC Regulation (EEC) No. 123/85 in 1995 is a source of concern. If the EC attached more importance to free competition in the sector, this would lead to a profound transformation of the entire sector. Approximately 40% of all companies would lose their privileged position. If the regulation ceased to be applicable, there could be a shift towards the mega-car-centres already familiar in the US, i.e. several geographically grouped companies from the motor vehicle sector working together, to offer their consumers at the same time cars and accessories on sale, a car washing plant, leasing facilities, repair and maintenance services, etc.

Employment perspectives in the sector are rather pessimistic. Low profitability as a result of fierce competition is only one of the reasons for this. Present-day cars need less maintenance, because the so-called 'wearing' parts last longer. The total work volume has decreased. Identical technical developments force dealers and agents to make considerable investments in sophisticated diagnostic equipment. The market seems ready for a decrease in the number of dealers and agents, on the one hand (in the same way as the decrease in the number of petrol stations in the eighties) and formal or informal collaboration agreements between dealers for making investments, on the other. Until recently, the growth in the number of cars on the road managed to compensate for the above-mentioned developments, but this will be less the case in the future. The growth will undoubtedly be considerably less than in the past.

The structure and characteristics of the sector are strongly related to the growth of the number of vehicles in use. In 1962 there were one million vehicles in use and in 1990 there were no less that 4.5 million, 3.8 million of which were passenger cars. The end of this development is apparently not yet in sight since there are expected to be no less than 5.2 million passenger cars on the road in Belgium before 2010. The increase in the total number of cars, however, has not kept the vehicle market from turning into a replacement market, as it has already been for some time. In addition the sale of second-hand cars is also growing in importance.

Over the past ten years we have observed that the number of independent repair shops has grown. However, a decrease in this number is anticipated in the future although no one expects the independents to disappear from the market. The number of dealers and agents, by contrast, has remained constant. Here, too, a decrease is expected in the future. The case studies show, for example, that the future strategy of certain motor vehicle manufacturers is aimed at closing down the less profitable (and unprofitable) sales points. This is linked to the stagnating market. In a growing market the strategy would be directed at making the less profitable points of sale more profitable. The number of independent repair shops rose sharply at first, but in recent years has been decreasing.

A second noticeable development is the rise of the sales and service centres and the technical specialists (auto electrical systems, brakes, diesel, exhaust, etc.). Nevertheless the fact is that the dealers, agents, independent repair shops and bodyshops have managed to retain the greater part of the market. The case studies show that the dealers and agents, on the one hand, and the independent repair shops and bodyshops on the other, do not necessarily constitute two separate segments of the market. A great number of independent repair shops undertake work contracted out from dealers and agents, and by means of these (informal) networks, through participation in training programmes provided by the importers and manufacturers, they manage to keep up to date with technological innovations.

The sectors under consideration employ 1.9% of the working population in the private sector. There are relatively more labourers, men and employees with a full-time contract in the sector. If we take the total working population as our starting point, (thus including the self-employed), then we arrive at a share of 2.6%. Both the number of wage-earners and the number of self-employed has risen during the past ten years. There has been a noticeable decrease in the number of apprentices (by almost 50% in a ten year period). As a training channel, the apprenticeship agreement or contract with shopkeepers and tradespeople has undeniably lost ground. The future prospects are rather bleak. The low average earning power and the rapid rise in productivity will cause employment to fall.

With respect to new technologies, little is known about the factual situation in the sector. In view of the fact that all high-tech motor vehicles are also on the market in Belgium, we suspect that the situation does not differ appreciably from that in the neighbouring countries. The required knowledge and skills which grow out of the technological innovations are in many cases passed on by the car manufacturers themselves via training given in their own centres. In the case studies a polarization with respect to the required qualifications has been observed. The core task appears more and more to be the diagnosis of the problem with the car. This core task requires technical and general insight and the capacity to reason and

interpret. It must therefore be carried out by qualified personnel. Conversely, the actual repair or replacement of the defective part is in fact fairly simple. The car manufacturers are trying to get a better grip on this core task via the development of interactive diagnostic equipment. In this way the diagnosis is becoming more standardized. Working with this sophisticated and costly diagnostic equipment, however, does on the whole require more highly skilled personnel. This brings us to the problem of qualification.

In the state educational system there are no less than four different channels by means of which young people can prepare for a job in the sector. At least until recently the flow to the labour market was fairly smooth, but there are reasons to assume that this will cease to be the case in the future. The sector has two major complaints regarding the state education system. First they point out the excessive number of schools. In addition, there appears to be too little interest among young people for the training, (a complaint, by the way, that we note in both industrial sectors and the construction sector). Until recently the sector was experiencing competition from the assembly sector due to the higher wages that are paid there. The three major contenders in the second-track education system – Education for Social Promotion, the VDAB (Flemish Employment Service) and Training for the Self-Employed – all provide training that is focused specifically on the sector. In certain cases the training is focused on unemployed persons who by means of a proper training programme will have a better chance of finding work (VDAB). In other cases the training offers people a second chance to acquire a related diploma, or else it offers individuals the opportunity to work on their car themselves in their free time (OSP, or Education for Social Promotion). In other cases, the training is focused particularly on those who want to become self-employed in the sector (Training for the Self-Employed). In addition, there is also training within the framework of collaboration between the VDAB and the sectors involved. Here, too, it is primarily a matter of training that is aimed at risk groups. In practice, the latter term is broadly interpreted. Thus recently a training programme called "car sales" was introduced for female job-seekers.

However extensive these initiatives may be, in the total training activities within the sector the initiatives taken by the manufacturers play the most important role. Unfortunately enough, it is precisely here that we find the greatest shortage of information. From the case studies it appears that the initiatives taken by the manufacturers differ from one make to another. With one manufacturer the training programmes are, in fact, compulsory. If too few employees are registered during a given period, the employer risks losing certain bonuses. In an extreme situation a company can even have its dealership withdrawn. With another manufacturer the training programmes are compulsory only for the technical advisers in the companies, but participation is stimulated by means of competitions and extra premiums. The agents are sometimes also brought in here in a subtle manner. With one particular manufacturer mailing is taken care of by the distributors, who are much closer to the dealers and agents and therefore have a better overview of possible qualification problems that may exist. In this way informal pressure can be exerted. An important point is that the training offered is not determined solely by the manufacturer. The dealers and agents can sometimes point out needs. A key role here is played by the technical inspectors, who are responsible for monitoring the dealers and the agents. Sometimes there is a more systematic enquiry.

Certain forms of collaboration between different manufacturers constitute one very important possible development for the future. Up to the present time each manufacturer has been investing a lot of money in its own training infrastructure. The recession in the assembly industry, on the one hand, and the necessity to keep investing in training, on the other, make this intention more understandable. Training is also being contracted out. This applies in particular to training in sales techniques, marketing and telemarketing.

We also want to mention a few private initiatives in addition to those of the manufacturers. Thus all motor vehicle spraying companies provide training programmes (usually free) for their customers. In one case, for example, the installation of a high-tech spraying cabin includes two weeks of training. In another case, a multinational in the chemical sector provides identical training for a selected group of bodyshop companies. The condition is that they are members of an organization created especially for the occasion.

Finally, there are developments in the companies themselves. From the case studies it is apparent that self-study is also growing in importance. This is becoming possible through the availability of technical information in the company, (usually made available by the manufacturers or the suppliers), whether in the form of loose-leaf information sheets or via a computer link to central data banks (e.g. Audatex data bank). It was apparent from the case studies that self-study requires a serious change in attitude by the employees.

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